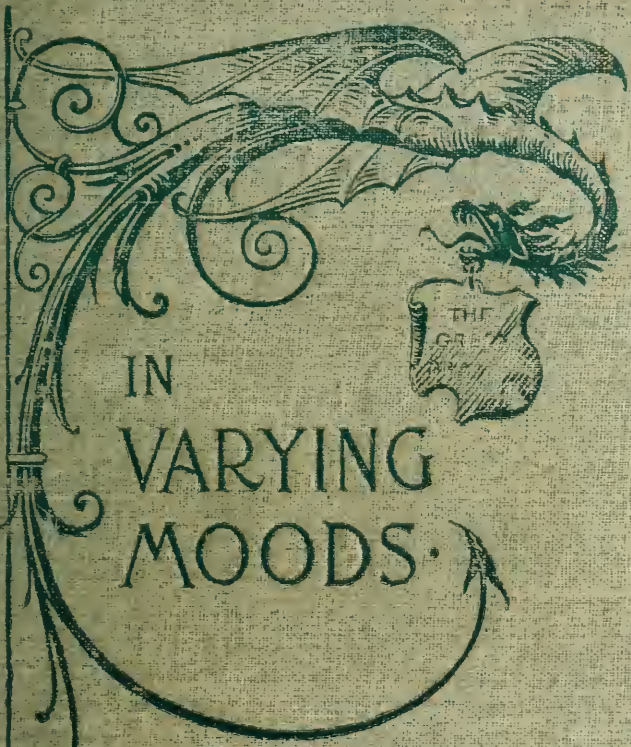


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BY THE AUTHOR OF
"SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT"



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In Varying Moods

BY

BEATRICE HARRADEN

AUTHOR OF "SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT," ETC.

AMERICAN COPYRIGHT EDITION

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
AT THE GREEN DRAGON: AN EPISODE—	
I.—HIERONYMUS COMES	3
II.—HIERONYMUS STAYS	12
III.—THE PRIMARY GLORY	23
IV.—THE MAKING OF THE PASTRY	36
V.—PASTRY AND PERSONAL MONARCHY	43
VI.—THE EXCISEMAN'S LIBRARY	55
VII.—AUNTIE LLOYD PROTESTS	63
VIII.—THE DISTANCE GROWS	69
IX.—DAVID LAMENTS	79
X.—HIERONYMUS SPEAKS	89
XI.—HIERONYMUS GOES	98
THE PAINTER AND HIS PICTURE	107
THE UMBRELLA-MENDER: A STUDY	119
THE BIRD ON ITS JOURNEY	155
THE CLOCKMAKER AND HIS WIFE	191
SORROW AND JOY: AN ALLEGORY	237
AN IDYL OF LONDON	235

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PREFACE TO AMERICAN EDITION.

IT is some years ago since I saw in a little church in Sussex a fragment of an old stained-glass window representing God the Father supporting on the cross the arms of God the Son. I think it dated back to the twelfth century. I remember that when I saw it, the idea of the "Painter and His Picture" flashed across my mind. Strangely enough, it was in the parlour of the Green Dragon, many years afterwards, that I wrote the "Painter and His Picture." It is very curious how those old memories will assert

themselves when one is thinking of other things in quite other surroundings.

This was the case with the "Umbrella-Mender." The lad always interested me, but one day when I was full of other thoughts, he came before my mind's eye so vividly that there was no resisting his presence, and I wrote what I felt to be his record.

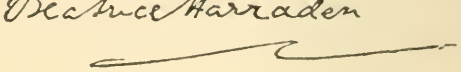
And so it was with the old man and the young girl in the "National Gallery." I saw them together there and noted their individualities. A long time afterwards, whilst I was strolling along the Somersetshire lanes, these two people took possession of my mind, and there was no escape from them until I had written what I chose to believe was their story.

I found the clockmaker and his wife in a

Somersetshire village: one of the quaintest and prettiest villages in England. The little old lady was a remarkable personality, and I spent many pleasant hours with her. I was never able to forget her pathetic face, and the painful constraint of her manner. Something had "frozen the genial current of her soul." So one day, in Cannes, I think, I began to ease my heart of her, and set to work to construe a history about her, which has in it more truth than fiction. And, indeed, that may be said of most of the stories in this little book.

The "Green Dragon" was written in Mentone, amongst the olive trees. As I now write, the landlady of the Green Dragon sends me a box of daffodils and asks if I have yet invented a tale about my favourite inn. I dare not tell her that I have already

done so, for I feel quite sure that she would never forgive me for speaking disrespectfully of the Shropshire crumpets and the rum in the tea.



April 2, 1894.

AT THE GREEN DRAGON

AN EPISODE

AT THE GREEN DRAGON.

CHAPTER I.

HIERONYMUS COMES.

IT was a pouring September evening when a stranger knocked at the door of the Crown Inn. Old Mrs. Howells saw that he carried a portmanteau in his hand.

"If it 's a bedroom you want," she said, "I can't be bothered with you. What with brewing the beer and cleaning the brass, I 've more than I can manage. I 'm that tired!"

"And so am I," said the stranger, pathetically.

"Go over the way to the Green Dragon," suggested Mrs. Howells. "Mrs. Benbow may be

able to put you up. But what with the brewing and the cleaning, I can't do with you."

The stranger stepped across the road to the Green Dragon. He tapped at the door ; and a cheery little woman made her appearance. She was carrying what they call in Shropshire a devil of hot beer. It smelt good.

"Good evening, ma'am," said the stranger. "Can you house me for the night? The hostess of the Crown Inn has turned me away. But you surely will not do the same? You observe what a bad cold I have."

Mrs. Benbow glanced sharply at the stranger. She had not kept the Green Dragon for ten years without learning something about character ; and to-night she was particularly on her guard, for her husband had gone to stay for two days with some relative in Shrewsbury, so that Mrs. Benbow and old John of the wooden leg, called *Dot and carry one*, were left as sole guardians of the little wayside public-house.

"It is not very convenient for me to take you in," she said.

"And it would not be very convenient for me to be shut out," he replied. "Besides which, I have had a whiff of that hot beer."

At that moment a voice from the kitchen cried impatiently: "Here, missus! where be that beer of your'n? I be feeling quite faint-like!"

"As though he could call out like that if he was faint?" laughed Mrs. Benbow, running off into the kitchen.

When she returned, she found the stranger seated at the foot of the staircase.

"And what do you propose to do for me?" he asked, patiently.

There was no mistaking the genial manner. Mrs. Benbow was conquered.

"I propose to fry some eggs and bacon for your supper," she said, cheerily. "And then I propose to make your bedroom ready."

"Sensible woman!" he said, as he followed her into the parlour, where a fire was burning brightly. He threw himself into the easy-chair, and immediately experienced that sensation of repose and thankfulness which comes over us

when we have found a haven. There he rested, content with himself and his surroundings. The fire lit up his face, and showed him to be a man of about forty years.

There was nothing specially remarkable about him. The face in repose was sad and thoughtful; and yet when he discovered a yellow cat sleeping under the table, he smiled as though some great pleasure had come into his life.

"Come along, little comrade!" he said, as he captured her. She looked up into his face so frankly, that the stranger was much impressed. "Why, I do believe you are a dog undergoing a cat incarnation," he continued. "What qualities did you lack when you were a dog, I wonder? Perhaps you did not steal sufficiently well: perhaps you had not cultivated restfulness. And your name? Your name shall be Gamboge. I think that is a suitable appellation for you: certainly more suitable than most of the names thrust upon unoffending humanity. My own name for instance, Hieronymus! Ah, you may well mew! You are a thoroughly sensible creature."

So he amused himself until Mrs. Benbow came with his supper. Then he pointed to the cat, and said quietly :

" That is a very companionable dog of yours."

Mrs. Benbow darted a look of suspicion at the stranger. " We call that a cat in Shropshire," she said, beginning to regret that she had agreed to house the stranger.

" Well, no doubt you are partially right," said the stranger, solemnly ; " but, at the same time, you are partially wrong. To use the language of the Theosophists——"

Mrs. Benbow interrupted him.

" Eat your supper whilst it is hot," she said, " then perhaps you 'll feel better. Your cold is rather heavy in your head, is n't it ? "

He laughed good-temperedly, and smiled at her as though to reassure her that he was quite in his right senses ; and then, without further discussion, he began to make short work of the fried eggs and bacon. Gamboge, sitting quietly by the fireside, scorned to beg ; she preferred to steal. That is a way some people have.

The stranger finished his supper, and lit his pipe. Once or twice he began to doze. The first time he was aroused by Gamboge, who had jumped on to the table, and was seeking what she might devour.

"Ah, Gamboge," he said, sleepily, "I am sorry I have not left anything appetising for you. I was so hungry. Pray excuse."

Then he dozed off again. The second time he was aroused by the sound of singing. He caught the words of the chorus :

"I'll gaily sing from day to day,
And do the best I can ;
If sorrows meet me on the way,
I'll bear them like a man."

"An excellent resolution," murmured the stranger, becoming drowsy once more. "Only I wish they'd kept their determinations to themselves."

The third time he was disturbed by the sound of angry voices. There was some quarrelling going on in the kitchen of the Green Dragon

The voices became louder. There was a clatter of stools and a crash of glasses.

"You're a pack of lying gipsies!" sang out some one. "You know well you did n't pay the missus!"

"Go for him! go for him!" was the cry.

Then the parlour door was flung open, and Mrs. Benbow rushed in. "Oh," she cried, "these gipsy men are killing the carpenter!"

Hieronymus Howard rushed into the kitchen, and threw himself into the midst of the contest. Three powerful tramps were kicking a figure prostrate on the ground. One other man, Mr. Greaves, the blacksmith, was trying in vain to defend his comrade. He had no chance against these gipsy fellows, and though he fought like a lion, his strength was, of course, nothing against theirs. Old John of the one leg had been knocked over, and was picking himself up with difficulty. Everything depended on the promptness of the stranger. He was nothing of a warrior, this Hieronymus Howard: he was just a quiet student, who

knew how to tussle with Greek roots rather than with English tramps. But he threw himself upon the gipsies, fought hand to hand with them, was blinded with blows, nearly trampled beneath their feet, all but crushed against the wall. Now he thrust them back. Now they pressed on him afresh. Now the blacksmith, with desperate effort, attacked them again. Now the carpenter, bruised and battered, but wild for revenge, dragged himself from the floor, and aimed a blow at the third gipsy's head. He fell.

Then after a short, sharp contest, the two other gipsies were driven to the door, which Mrs. Benbow had opened wide, and were thrust out. The door was bolted safely.

But they had bolted one gipsy in with them. When they returned to the kitchen, they found him waiting for them. He had recovered himself.

Mrs. Benbow raised a cry of terror. She had thought herself safe in her little castle. The carpenter and the blacksmith were past fighting.

Hieronymus Howard gazed placidly at the great tramp.

"I am sorry we had forgotten you," he said, courteously. "Perhaps you will oblige us by following your comrades. I will open the door for you. I think we are all rather tired—are n't we? So perhaps you will go at once."

The man gazed sheepishly at him, and then followed him. Hieronymus Howard opened the door.

"Good evening to you," he said.

And the gipsy passed out without a word.

"Well now," said Hieronymus, as he drew the bolt, "that is the end of that."

Then he hastened into the parlour. Mrs. Benbow hurried after him, and was just in time to break his fall. He had swooned away.

CHAPTER II.

HIERONYMUS STAYS.

HIERONYMUS HOWARD had only intended to pass one night at the Green Dragon. But his sharp encounter with the gipsies altered his plans. He was battered and bruised and thoroughly shaken, and quite unable to do anything else except rest in the arm-chair and converse with Gamboge, who had attached herself to him, and evidently appreciated her companionship. His right hand was badly sprained. Mrs. Benbow looked after him most tenderly, bemoaning all the time that he should be in such a plight because of her. There was nothing that she was not willing to do for him; it was a long time since Hieronymus Howard had been so petted and spoilt. Mrs. Benbow treated every one like a young

child that needed to be taken care of. The very men who came to drink her famous ale were under her strict motherly authority.

"There now, Mr. Andrew, that 's enough for ye," she would say; "not another glass to-night. No, no, John Curtis; get you gone home. You 'll not coax another half-pint out of me."

She was generally obeyed: even Hieronymus Howard, who refused rather peevishly to take a third cup of beef-tea, found himself obliged to comply. When she told him to lie on the sofa, he did so without a murmur. When she told him to get up and take his dinner whilst it was still hot, he obeyed like a well-trained child. She cut his food and then took the knife away.

"You must n't try to use your right hand," she said, sternly. "Put it back in the sling at once."

Hieronymus obeyed. Her kind tyranny pleased and amused him, and he was not at all sorry to go on staying at the Green Dragon. He was really on his way to visit some friends

just on the border between Shropshire and Wales, to form one of a large house-party, consisting of people both interesting and intellectual; qualities, by the way, not necessarily inseparable. But he was just at the time needing quiet of mind, and he promised himself some really peaceful hours in this little Shropshire village, with its hills, some of them bare, and others girt with a belt of trees, and the brook gurgling past the wayside inn. He was tired, and here he would find rest. The only vexatious part was that he had hurt his hand. But for this mishap, he would have been quite content.

He told this to Mr. Benbow, who returned that afternoon, and who expressed his regret at the whole occurrence.

"Oh, I am well satisfied here," said Hieronymus, cheerily. "Your little wife is a capital hostess: somewhat of the tyrant, you know. Still one likes that; until one gets to the fourth cup of beef-tea! And she is an excellent cook, and the Green Dragon is most comfortable. I've noth-

ing to complain of, except my hand. That is a nuisance, for I wanted to do some writing. I suppose there is no one here who could write for me."

"Well," said Mr. Benbow, "perhaps the missus can. She can do most things. She 's real clever."

Mrs. Benbow being consulted on this matter, confessed that she could not do much in that line.

"I used to spell pretty well once," she said, brightly; "but the brewing and the scouring and the looking after other things have knocked all that out of me."

"You wrote to me finely when I was away," her husband said. He was a quiet fellow, and proud of his little wife, and he liked people to know how capable she was.

"Ah, but you are n't over-particular, Ben, bless you," she answered, laughing, and running away to her many duties. Then she returned to tell Hieronymus that there was a splendid fire in the kitchen, and that he was to go and sit there.

"I 'm busy doing the washing in the back-yard," she said. "Ben has gone to look after the sheep. Perhaps you 'll give an eye to the door, and serve out the ale. It would help me mighty. I 'm rather pressed for time to-day. We shall brew to-morrow, and I must get the washing done this afternoon."

She took it for granted that he would obey, and of course he did. He transferred himself, his pipe, and his book to the front kitchen, and prepared for customers. Hieronymus Howard had once been an ambitious man, but never before had he been seized by such an overwhelming aspiration as now possessed him—to serve out the Green Dragon ale!

"If only some one would come!" he said to himself scores of times.

No one came. Hieronymus, becoming impatient, sprang up from his chair and gazed anxiously out of the window, just in time to see three men stroll into the opposite inn.

"Confound them!" he cried; "why don't they come here?"

The next moment, four riders stopped at the rival public-house, and old Mrs. Howells hurried out to them, as though to prevent any possibility of them slipping across to the other side of the road.

This was almost more than Hieronymus could bear quietly. He could scarcely refrain from opening the Green Dragon door and advertising in a loud voice the manifold virtues of Mrs. Benbow's ale and spirits. But he recollected in time that even wayside inns have their fixed code of etiquette, and that nothing remained for him but to possess his soul in patience. He was rewarded: in a few minutes a procession of wagons filed slowly past the Green Dragon; he counted ten horses and five men. Would they stop? Hieronymus waited in breathless excitement. Yes, they did stop, and four of the drivers came into the kitchen.

"Where is the fifth?" asked Hieronymus, sharply, having a keen eye to business.

"He be minding the horses," they answered, looking at him curiously. But they seemed to

take it for granted that he was there to serve them, and they leaned back luxuriously in the great oak settle, whilst Hieronymus poured out the beer, and received in exchange some grimy coppers.

After they had gone the fifth man came to have his share of the refreshment ; and then followed a long pause, which seemed to Hieronymus like whole centuries.

"It was during a lengthened period like this," he remarked to himself, as he paced up and down the kitchen, "yes, it was during infinite time like this that the rugged rocks became wave-worn pebbles!"

Suddenly he heard the sound of horses' feet.

"It is a rider," he said. "I shall have to go out to him."

He hastened to the door, and saw a young woman on a great white horse. She carried a market basket on her arm. She wore no riding-habit, but was just dressed in the ordinary way There was nothing picturesque about her appearance, but Hieronymus thought her face looked

interesting. She glanced at him, as though she wondered what he could possibly be doing at the Green Dragon.

"Well, and what may I do for you?" he asked. He did not quite like to say, "What may I bring for you?" He left her to decide that matter.

"I wanted to see Mrs. Benbow," she said.

"She is busy doing the washing," he answered. "But I will go and tell her, if you will kindly detain any customer who may chance to pass by."

He hurried away, and came back with the answer that Mrs. Benbow would be out in a minute.

"Thank you," the young woman said, quietly. Then she added: "You have hurt your arm, I see."

"Yes," he answered; "it is a great nuisance. I cannot write. I have been wondering whether I could get any one to write for me. Do you know of any one?"

"No," she said, bitterly; "we don't write here. We make butter and cheese, and we

fatten up our poultry, and then we go to market and sell our butter, cheese, and poultry."

"Well," said Hieronymus, "and why should n't you?"

He looked up at her, and saw what a discontented expression had come over her young face.

She took no notice of his interruption, but just switched the horse's ears with the end of her whip.

"That is what we do year after year," she continued, "until I suppose we have become so dull that we don't care to do anything else. That is what we have come into the world for: to make butter and cheese, and fatten up our poultry, and go to market."

"Yes," he answered, "and we all have to do it in some form or other. We all go to market to sell our goods, whether they be brains, or practical common-sense (which often, you know, has nothing to do with brains), or butter, or poultry. Now I don't know, of course, what you have in your basket; but supposing you have

eggs, which you are taking to market. Well, you are precisely in the same condition as the poet who is on his way to a publisher's, carrying a new poem in his breast-pocket. And yet there is a difference."

"Of course there is," she jerked out scornfully.

"Yes, there *is* a difference," he continued, placidly; "it is this: you will return without those eggs, but the poet will come back still carrying his poem in his breast pocket!"

Then he laughed at his own remark.

"That is how things go in the great world, you know," he said. "Out in the great world there is an odd way of settling matters. Still they must be settled somehow or other!"

"Out in the world!" she exclaimed. "That is where I long to go."

"Then why on earth don't you?" he replied.

At that moment Mrs. Benbow came running out.

"I am so sorry to keep you waiting, Miss Hammond," she said to the young girl; "but

what with the washing and the making ready for the brewing to-morrow, I don't know where to turn."

Then followed a series of messages to which Hieronymus paid no attention. And then Miss Hammond cracked her whip, waved her greetings with it, and the old white horse trotted away.

"And who is the rider of the horse?" asked Hieronymus.

"Oh, she is Farmer Hammond's daughter," said Mrs. Benbow. "Her name is Joan. She is an odd girl, different from the other girls here. They say she is quite a scholar too. Why, *she* would be the one to write for you. The very one, of course! I 'll call to her."

But by that time the old white horse was out of sight.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRIMARY GLORY.

THE next day at the Green Dragon was a busy one. Mrs. and Mr. Benbow were up betimes, banging casks about in the cellar. When Hieronymus Howard came down to breakfast, he found that they had brought three great barrels into the kitchen, and that one was already half full of some horrible brown liquid, undergoing the process of fermentation. He felt himself much aggrieved that he was unable to contribute his share of work to the proceedings. It was but little comfort to him that he was again allowed to attend to the customers. The pouring out of the beer had lost its charm for him.

"It is a secondary glory to pour out the beer," he grumbled. "I aspire to the primary glory of helping to make the beer."

Mrs. Benbow was heaping on the coal in the furnace. She turned round and looked at the disconsolate figure.

"There is one thing you might do," she said. "I 've not half enough barm. There are two or three places where you might call for some; and between them all, perhaps you 'll get enough."

She then mentioned three houses, Farmer Hammond's being amongst the number.

"Very likely the Hammonds would oblige us," she said. "They are neighbourly folk. They live at the Malt-House Farm, two miles off. You can't carry the jar, but you can take the perambulator and wheel it back. I've often done that when I had much to carry."

Hieronymus Howard looked doubtfully at the perambulator.

"Very well," he said, submissively. "I suppose I shall only look like an ordinary tramp. It seems to be the fashion to tramp on this road!"

It never entered his head to rebel. The great

jar was lifted into the perambulator, and Hieronymus wheeled it away, still keeping up his dignity, though under somewhat trying circumstances.

"I rather wish I had not mentioned anything about primary glory," he remarked to himself. "However, I will not faint by the wayside; Mrs. Benbow is a person not lightly to be disobeyed. In this respect she reminds me distinctly of Queen Elizabeth, or Margaret of Anjou, with just a dash of Napoleon Bonaparte!"

So he walked on along the highroad. Two or three tramps passed him, wheeling similar perambulators, some heaped up with rags and old tins and umbrellas, and occasionally a baby; representing the sum-total of their respective possessions in the world. They looked at him with curiosity, but no pleasantry passed their lips. There was nothing to laugh at in Hieronymus's appearance; there was a quiet dignity about him which was never lost on any one. His bearing tallied with his character, the char-

acter of a mellowed human being. There was a restfulness about him which had soothed more than one tired person ; not the restfulness of stupidity, but the repose only gained by those who have struggled through a great fever to a great calm. His was a clean-shaven face ; his hair was iron-grey. There was a kind but firm expression about his mouth, and a suspicion of humour lingering in the corners. His eyes looked at you frankly. There seemed to be no self-consciousness in his manner ; long ago, perhaps, he had managed to get away from himself.

He enjoyed the country, and stopped more than once to pick some richly tinted leaf, or some tiny flower nestling in the hedge. He confided all his treasures to the care of the perambulator. It was a beautiful morning, and the sun lit up the hills, which were girt with a belt of many gems : a belt of trees, each rivalling the other in coloured luxuriance. Hieronymus sang. Then he turned down a lane to the left and found some nuts. He ate these,

and went on his way again, and at last found himself outside a farm of large and important aspect. A man was stacking a hay-rick. Hieronymus watched him keenly.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed; "I wish I could do that. How on earth do you manage it? And did it take you long to learn?"

The man smiled in the usual yokel fashion, and went on with his work. Hieronymus plainly did not interest him.

"Is this the Malt-House Farm?" cried Hieronymus, lustily.

"What else should it be?" answered the man.

"These rural characters are inclined to be one-sided," thought Hieronymus, as he opened the gate and wheeled the perambulator into the pretty garden. "It seems to me that they are almost as narrow-minded as the people who live in cities and pride themselves on their breadth of view. Almost—but on reflection, not quite!"

He knocked at the door of the porch, and a

great bustling woman opened it. He explained his mission to her, and pointed to the jar for the barm.

"You would oblige Mrs. Benbow greatly, ma'am," he said. "In fact, we cannot get on with our beer unless you come to our assistance."

"Step into the parlour, sir," she said, smiling, "and I 'll see how much we 've got. I think you are the gentleman who fought the gipsies You 've hurt your arm, I see."

"Yes, a great nuisance," he answered, cheerily; "and that reminds me of my other quest. I want some one to write for me an hour or two every day. Mrs. Benbow mentioned your daughter, the young lady who came to us on the white horse yesterday."

He was going to add: "The young lady who wishes to go out into the world"; but he checked himself, guessing by instinct that the young lady and her mother had probably very little in common.

"Perhaps, though," he said, "I take a liberty

in making the suggestion. If so, you have only to reprove me, and that is the end of it."

"Oh, I daresay she 'd like to write for you," said Mrs. Hammond, "if she can be spared from the butter and the fowls. She likes books and pen and paper. They 're things as I don't favour."

"No," said Hieronymus, suddenly filled with an overwhelming sense of his own littleness; "you are occupied with other more useful matters."

"Yes, indeed," rejoined Mrs. Hammond, fervently. "Well, if you 'll be seated, I 'll send Joan to you, and I 'll see about the barm."

Hieronymus settled down in an old oak chair, and took a glance at the comfortable panelled room. There was every appearance of ease about the Malt-House Farm, and yet Farmer Hammond and his wife toiled incessantly from morning to evening, exacting continual labour from their daughter too. There was a good deal of brasswork in the parlour: it was kept spotlessly bright.

In a few minutes Joan came in. She carried the jar.

"I have filled the jar with barm," she said, without any preliminaries. "One of the men can take it back if you like."

"Oh no, thank you," he said, looking at her with some interest. "It came in the perambulator; it can return in the same conveyance."

She bent over the table, leaning against the jar. She smiled at his words, and the angry look of resentfulness, which seemed to be her habitual expression, gave way to a more pleasing one. Joan was not good-looking, but her face was decidedly interesting. She was of middle stature, slight but strong; not the typical country-girl with rosy cheeks, but pale, though not unhealthy. She was dark of complexion; her soft brown hair, over which she seemed to have no control, was done into a confused mass at the back, untidy, but pleasing. Her forehead was not interfered with; you might see it for yourself, and note the great bumps which those rogues of phrenologists delight to finger. She

carried her head proudly, and from certain determined little jerks which she gave to it, you might judge of her decided character. She was dressed in a dark gown, and wore an apron of coarse linen. At the most she was nineteen years of age.

Hieronymus just glanced at her, and could not help comparing her with her mother.

"Well," he said, pleasantly, "and now, having settled the affairs of the Green Dragon, I proceed to my own. Will you come and be my scribbler for a few days? Or, if you wish for a grander title, will you act as my amanuensis? I am sadly in need of a little help. I have found out that you can help me."

"I don't know whether you could read my writing," she said, shyly.

"That does not matter in the least," he answered. "I sha'n't have to read it. Some one else will."

"My spelling is not faultless," she said.

"Also a trifle!" he replied. "Spelling, like every other virtue, is a relative thing, depending

largely on the character of the individual. Have you any other objection?"

She shook her head, and smiled brightly at him.

"I should like to write for you," she said, "if only I could do it well enough."

"I am sure of that," he answered, kindly. "Mrs. Benbow tells me you are a young lady who does good work. I admire that beyond everything. You fatten up the poultry well, you make butter and pastry well—should n't I just like to taste it! And I am sure you have cleaned this brasswork."

"Yes," she said, "when I am tired of every one and every thing, I go and rub up the brasses until they are spotless. When I am utterly weary of the whole concern, and just burning to get away from this stupid little village, I polish the candlesticks and handles until my arms are worn out. I had a good turn at it yesterday."

"Was yesterday a bad day with you then?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "When I was riding

the old white horse yesterday, I just felt that I could go on riding, riding for ever. But she is such a slow coach. She won't go quickly!"

"No, I should think you could walk more quickly," said Hieronymus. "Your legs would take you out into the world more swiftly than that old white horse. And being clear of this little village, and being out in the great world, what do you want to do?"

"To learn!" she cried; "to learn to know something about life, and to have other interests: something great and big, something worth wearing one's strength away for."

Then she stopped suddenly. "What a goose I am!" she said, turning away half ashamed.

"Something great and big," he repeated. "Cynics would tell you that you have a weary quest before you. But I think it is very easy to find something great and big. Only, it all depends on the strength of your telescope. You must order the best kind, and unfortunately one can't afford the best kind when one is very young. You have to pay for your telescope, not

with money, but with years. But when at last it comes into your possession, ah, how it alters the look of things."

He paused a moment, as though lost in thought; and then, with the brightness so characteristic of him, he added:

"Well, I must be going home to my humble duties at the Green Dragon, and you, no doubt, have to return to your task of feeding up the poultry for the market. When is market-day at Church Stretton?"

"On Friday," she answered.

"That is the day I have to send off some of my writing," he said; "my market-day, also, you see."

"Are you a poet?" she asked, timidly.

"No," he answered, smiling at her; "I am that poor creature, an historian: one of those restless persons who furridge amongst the annals of the past."

"Oh," she said, enthusiastically, "I have always cared more about history than anything else!"

"Well, then, if you come to-morrow to the Green Dragon at eleven o'clock," he said, kindly, "you will have the privilege of writing history instead of reading it. And now I suppose I must hasten back to the tyranny of Queen Elizabeth. Can you lift that jar into the perambulator? You see I can't."

She hoisted it into the perambulator, and then stood at the gate, watching him as he pushed it patiently over the rough road.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAKING OF THE PASTRY.

THAT same afternoon Mrs. Hammond put on her best things and drove in the dog-cart to Minton, where Auntie Lloyd of the Tan-House Farm was giving a tea-party. Joan had refused to go. She had a profound contempt for these social gatherings, and Auntie Lloyd and she had no great love, the one for the other. Auntie Lloyd, who was regarded as the oracle of the family, summed Joan up in a few sentences :

"She 's a wayward creature, with all her fads about books and book-learning. I 've no patience with her. Fowls and butter and such things have been good enough for us ; why does she want to meddle with things which don't concern her ? She 's clever at her work, and diligent too. If it were n't for that, there 'd be no abiding her."

Joan summed Auntie Lloyd up in a few words :

"Oh, she 's Auntie Lloyd," she said, shrugging her shoulders.

So when her mother urged her to go to Minton to this tea-party, which was to be something quite special, Joan said :

"No, I don't care about going. Auntie Lloyd worries me to death. And what with her, and the rum in the tea, and those horrid crumpets, I 'd far rather stay at home, and make pastry, and read a book."

So she stayed. There was plenty of pastry in the larder, and there seemed no particular reason why she should add to the store. But she evidently thought differently about the matter, for she went into the kitchen, and rolled up her sleeves and began her work.

"I hope this will be the best pastry I have ever made," she said to herself, as she prepared several jam-puffs and an open tart. "I should like him to taste my pastry. An historian. I wonder what we shall write about to-morrow."

She put the pastry into the oven, and sat

lazily in the ingle, nursing her knees, and musing. She was thinking the whole time of Hieronymus, of his kind and genial manner, and his face with the iron-grey hair: she would remember him always, even if she never saw him again. Once or twice it crossed her mind that she had been foolish to speak so impatiently to him of her village life. He would just think her a silly discontented girl, and nothing more. And yet it had seemed so natural to talk to him in that strain: she knew by instinct that he would understand, and he was the first she had ever met who would be likely to understand. The others—her father, her mother, David Ellis the exciseman, who was supposed to be fond of her, these and others in the neighbourhood—what did they care about her desire to improve her mind, and widen out her life, and multiply her interests? She had been waiting for months, almost for years indeed, to speak openly to some one: she could not have let the chance go by, now that it had come to her.

The puffs meanwhile were forgotten. When

at last she recollected them, she hastened to their rescue, and found that she was only just in time. Two were burnt: she placed the others in a dish, and threw the damaged ones on the table. As she did so, the kitchen-door opened, and the exciseman came in, and seeing the pastry, he exclaimed:

"Oh, Joan, making pastry! Then I 'll test it!"

"You 'll do nothing of the sort," she said, half angrily, as she put her hands over the dish. "I won't have it touched. You can eat the burnt ones if you like."

"Not I," he answered. "I want the best. Why, Joan, what 's the matter with you? You 're downright cross to-day."

"I 'm no different from usual," she said.

"Yes, you are," he said; "and, what's more, you grow different every week."

"I grow more tired of this horrid little village and of every one in it, if that 's what you mean," she answered.

He had thrown his whip on the chair, and

stood facing her. He was a prosperous man, much respected, and much liked for many miles round Little Stretton. It was an open secret that he loved Joan Hammond, the only question in the village being whether Joan would have him when the time came for him to propose to her. No girl in her senses would have been likely to refuse the exciseman; but then Joan was not in her senses; so that anything might be expected of her. At least, such was the verdict of Auntie Lloyd, who regarded her niece with the strictest disapproval. Joan had always been more friendly with David than with any one else; and it was no doubt this friendliness, remarkable in one who kept habitually apart from others, which had encouraged David to go on hoping to win her, not by persuasion but by patience. He loved her, indeed he had always loved her; and in the old days, when he was a schoolboy and she was a little baby-child, he had left his companions to go and play with his tiny girl-friend up at the Malt-House Farm. He had no sister of his own, and he liked to nurse and

pet the querulous little creature who was always quiet in his arms. He could soothe her when no one else had any influence. But the years had come and gone, and they had grown apart; not he from her, but she from him. And now he stood in the kitchen of the old farm, reading in her very manner the answer to the question which he had not yet asked her. That question was always on his lips: how many times had he not said it aloud when he rode his horse over the country? But Joan was forbidding of late months, and especially of late weeks, and the exciseman had always told himself sadly that the right moment had not yet come. And to-day, also, it was not the right moment. A great sorrow seized him, for he longed to tell her that he loved and understood her, and that he was yearning to make her happy. She should have books of her own; books, books, books: he had already bought a few volumes to form the beginning of her library. They were not well chosen, perhaps, but there they were, locked up in his private drawer. He was not learnèd, but

he would learn for her sake. All this flashed through his mind as he stood before her. He looked at her face, and could not trace one single expression of kindliness or encouragement.

"Then I must go on waiting," he thought, and he stooped and picked up his whip.

"Good-bye, Joan," he said, quietly.

The kitchen-door swung on its hinges, and Joan was once more alone.

"An historian," she said to herself, as she took away the rolling-pin, and put the pastry into the larder. "I wonder what we shall write about to-morrow."

CHAPTER V.

PASTRY AND PERSONAL MONARCHY.

JOAN sat in the parlour of the Green Dragon, waiting until Hieronymus had finished eating a third jam-puff, and could pronounce himself ready to begin dictating. A few papers were scattered about on the table, and Gamboge was curled up on the hearth-rug. Joan was radiant with pleasure, for this was her nearest approach to intellectuality; a new world had opened to her as though by magic. And she was radiant with another kind of pleasure: this was only the third time she had seen the historian, and each time she was the happier. It was at first a little shock to her sense of intellectual propriety that the scholar yonder could condescend to so trivial a matter as pastry; but then Hieronymus had his own way about him, which carried conviction in the end.

"Well," he said, "and now I think I am ready to begin. Dear me! What excellent pastry!"

Joan smiled, and dipped her pen in the ink.

"And to think that David nearly ate it," she said to herself. And that was about the first time she had thought of him since yesterday.

Then the historian began. His language was simple and dignified, like the man himself. His subject was "An Introduction to the Personal Monarchy, which began with the Reign of Henry VIII." Everything he said was crystal-clear. Moreover, he had that rare gift, the power of condensing and of suggesting too. He was nothing if not an impressionist. Joan had no difficulty in keeping pace with him, for he dictated slowly. After nearly two hours, he left off, and gave a great sigh of relief.

"There now," he said, "that 's enough for to-day."

And he seemed just like a schoolboy released from lessons.

"Come, come," he added, as he looked over

the manuscript. "I shall be quite proud to send that in to the printer. You would make a capital little secretary. You are so quiet, and you don't scratch with your pen: qualities which are only too rare. Well, we shall be able to go on with this work, if you can spare the time, and will oblige me. And we must make some arrangement about money matters."

"As for that," said Joan, hastily, "it 's such a change from the never-ending fowls and that everlasting butter."

"Of course it is," said Hieronymus, as he took his pipe from the mantel-shelf. "But all the same, we will be business-like. Besides, consider the advantage: you will be earning a little money with which you can buy either books to read, or fowls to fatten up. You can take your choice, you know."

"I should choose the books," she said, quite fiercely.

"How spiteful you are about those fowls!" he said.

"So would you be, if you had been looking

after them all your life," Joan answered, still more fiercely.

"There is no doubt about you being a volcanic young lady," Hieronymus remarked, thoughtfully. "But I understand. I was also a volcano once: I am now extinct. You will be extinct after a few years, and you will be so thankful for the repose. But one has to go through a great many eruptions as preliminaries to peace."

"Any kind of experience is better than none at all," Joan said, more gently this time. "You can't think how I dread a life in which nothing happens. I want to have my days crammed full of interests and events. Then I shall learn something; but here—what can one learn? You should just see Auntie Lloyd, and be with her for a quarter of an hour. When you 've seen her, you 've seen the whole neighbourhood. Oh, how I dislike her!"

Her tone of voice expressed so heartily her feelings about Auntie Lloyd, that Hieronymus laughed, and Joan laughed too.

She had put on her bonnet, and stood ready

to go home. The historian stroked Gamboge, put away his papers, and expressed himself inclined to accompany Joan part of the way.

He ran into the kitchen to tell Mrs. Benbow that he would not be long gone.

"Dinner won't be ready for quite an hour," she said, "as the butcher came so late. But here is a cup of beef-tea for you. You look rather tired."

"I 've had such a lot of pastry," Hieronymus pleaded, and he turned to Mr. Benbow, who had just come into the kitchen followed by his faithful collie. "I don't feel as though I *could* manage the beef-tea!"

"It 's no use kicking against the traces," said Mr. Benbow, laughing. "I 've found that out long ago. Sarah is a tyrant."

But it was evidently a tyranny which suited him very well, for there seemed to be a kind of settled happiness between the host and hostess of the Green Dragon. Some such thought passed through Hieronymus's mind as he gulped down the beef-tea, and then started off happily with Joan.

"I like both the Benbows," he said to her. "And it is very soothing to be with people who are happy together. I 'm cosily housed there, and not at all sorry to have had my plans altered by the gipsies; especially now that I can go on with my work so comfortably. My friends in Wales may wait for me as long as they choose."

Joan would have wished to tell him how glad she was that he was going to stay. But she just smiled happily. He was so bright himself, that it was impossible not to be happy in his company.

"I 'm so pleased I have done some dictating to-day," he said, as he plucked an autumn leaf and put it into his button-hole. "And now I can enjoy myself all the more. You cannot think how I do enjoy the country. These hills are so wonderfully soothing. I never remember being in a place where the hills have given me such a sense of repose as here. Those words constantly recur to me:

> "'His dews drop mutely on the hill,
> His cloud above it saileth still,

(Though on its slopes men sow and reap).
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His Beloved sleep.'

It 's all so true, you know, and yonder *are* the slopes cultivated by men. I am always thinking of these words here. They match with the hills, and they match with my feelings."

"I have never thought about the hills in that way," she said.

"No," he answered, kindly, "because you are not tired yet. But when you are tired, not with imaginary battlings, but with the real campaigns of life, then you will think about the dews falling softly on the hills."

"Are you tired, then?" she aked.

"I have been very tired," he answered, simply.

They walked on in silence for a few minutes, and then he added: "You wished for knowledge, and here you are surrounded by opportunities for attaining to it."

"I have never found Auntie Lloyd a specially

interesting subject for study," Joan said, obstinately.

Hieronymus smiled.

"I was not thinking of Auntie Lloyd," he said. "I was thinking of all these beautiful hedges, these lanes with their countless treasures, and this stream with its bed of stones, and those hills yonder: all of them eloquent with the wonder of the earth's history. You are literally surrounded with the means of making your minds beautiful, you country people. And why don't you do it?"

Joan listened. This was new language to her.

Hieronymus continued:

"The sciences are here for you. They offer themselves to you, without stint, without measure. Nature opens her book to you. Have you ever tried to read it? From the things which fret and worry our souls, from the people who worry and fret us, from ourselves who worry and fret ourselves, we can at least turn to Nature. There we find our right place, a resting-place of intense repose. There we lose that

troublesome part of ourselves, our own sense of importance. Then we rest, and not until then."

"Why should you speak to me of rest?" the girl cried, her fund of patience and control coming suddenly to an end. "I don't want to rest. I want to live a full, rich life, crammed with interests. I want to learn about life itself, not about things. It is so absurd to talk to me of rest. You 've had your time of unrest,—you said so. I don't care about peace and repose! I don't——"

She left off as suddenly as she had begun, fearing to seem too ill-mannered.

"Of course you don't," he said, gently, "and I 'm a goose to think you should. No, you will have to go out into the world, and to learn for yourself that it is just the same there as everywhere: butter and cheese-making, prize-winning, and prize-losing, and very little satisfaction either over the winning or the losing; and a great many Auntie Lloyds, probably a good deal more trying than the Little Stretton Auntie Lloyd. Only, if I were you, I should not talk

about it any more. I should just go. Saddle the white horse and go! Get your experiences, thick and quick. Then you will be glad to rest."

"Are you making fun of me?" she asked, half suspiciously, for he had previously joked about the slow pace of the white horse.

"No," he answered, in his kind way; "why should I make fun of you? We cannot all be content to go on living a quiet life in a little village."

At that moment the exciseman passed by them on horseback. He raised his hat to Joan, and looked with some curiosity at Hieronymus. Joan coloured. She remembered that she had not behaved kindly to him yesterday; and after all, he was David, David who had always been good to her, ever since she could remember.

"Who was that?" asked Hieronymus "What a trim, nice-looking man!"

"He is David Ellis, the exciseman," Joan said, half reluctantly.

"I wonder when he is going to test the beer at the Green Dragon," said the historian,

anxiously. "I would n't miss that for anything. Will you ask him?"

Joan hesitated. Then she hastened on a few steps, and called "David!"

David turned in his saddle, and brought his horse to a standstill. He wondered what Joan could have to say to him.

"When are you going to test the beer at the Green Dragon?" she asked.

"Some time this afternoon," he answered. "Why do you want to know?"

"The gentleman who is staying at the inn wants to know," Joan said.

"Is that all you have to say to me?" David asked, quietly.

"No," said Joan, looking up at him. "There is something more; about that pastry ——"

But just then Hieronymus had joined them.

"If you 're talking about pastry," he said, "I never tasted any better than Miss Hammond's. I ate a dishful this morning!"

The exciseman looked at Joan, and at the historian.

"Yes," he said, as he cracked his whip, "it tastes good for those who can get it, and it tastes bad to those who can't get it."

And with that he galloped away, leaving Joan confused, and Hieronymus mystified. He glanced at his companion, and seemed to expect that she would explain the situation; but as she did not attempt to do so, he walked quietly along with her until they came to the short cut which led back to the Green Dragon. There he parted from her, making an arrangement that she should come and write for him on the morrow. But as he strolled home, he said to himself: "I am much afraid that I have been eating some one else's pastry! Well, it was very good, especially the jam-puffs!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXCISEMAN'S LIBRARY.

DAVID ELLIS did not feel genially disposed towards the historian; and yet when he stood in the kitchen of the Green Dragon, testing the new brew, and saw Hieronymus eagerly watching the process, he could not but be amused. There was something about Hieronymus which was altogether irresistible. He had a power quite unconscious to himself, of drawing people over to his side. And yet he never tried to win: he was just himself, nothing more and nothing less.

"I am not wishing to pry into the secrets of the profession," he said to David Ellis; "but I do like to see how everything is done."

The exciseman good-naturedly taught him how to test the strength of the beer, and Hierony-

mus was as pleased as though he had learnt some great secret of the universe, or unearthed some long-forgotten fact in history.

"Are you sure the beer comes up to its usual standard?" he asked mischievously, turning to Mrs. Benbow at the same time. "Are you sure it has nothing of the beef-tea element about it? We drink beef-tea by the quart in this establishment. I'm allowed nothing else!"

David laughed, and said it was the best beer in the neighbourhood; and with that he left the kitchen and went into the ale-room, to exchange a few words with Mr. Howells, the proprietor of the rival inn, who always came to the Green Dragon to have his few glasses of beer in peace, free from the stormy remonstrances of his wife. Every one in Little Stretton knew his secret, and respected it. Hieronymus returned to the parlour, where he was supposed to be deep in study.

After a few minutes, some one knocked at the door, and David Ellis came in.

"Excuse me troubling you," he said, rather

nervously, "but there is a little matter I wanted to ask you about."

"It 's about that confounded pastry!" thought Hieronymus as he drew a chair to the fireside, and welcomed the exciseman to it.

David sank down into it, twisted his whip, and looked now at Hieronymus and now at the books which lay scattered on the table. He evidently wished to say something, but he did not know how to begin.

"I know what you want to say," said Hieronymus.

"No, you don't," answered the exciseman. "No one knows except myself."

Hieronymus retreated, crushed, but rather relieved too.

Then David, gaining courage, continued:

"Books are in your line, are n't they?"

"It just does happen to be my work to know a little about them," the historian answered. "Are you interested in them too?"

"Well," said David, hesitating, "I can't say I read them, but I buy them."

"Most people do that," said Hieronymus; "it takes less time to buy than to read, and we are pressed for time in this century."

"You see," said the exciseman, "I don't buy the books for myself, and it's rather awkward knowing what to get. Now what would *you* get for a person who was really fond of reading: something of a scholar, you understand? That would help me for my next lot."

"It all depends on the taste of the person," Hieronymus said, kindly. "Some like poetry, some like novels: others like books about the moon, and others like books about the North Pole, or the Tropics."

David did not know much about the North Pole or the Tropics, but he had certainly bought several volumes of poetry, and Hieronymus's words gave him courage.

"I bought several books of poetry," he said, lifting his head up with a kind of triumph which was unmistakable. "Cowper, Mrs. Hemans——"

"Yes," said Hieronymus, patiently.

"And the other day I bought Milton," continued the exciseman.

"Ah," said the historian, with a faint smile of cheerfulness. He had never been able to care for Milton (though he never owned to this).

"And now I thought of buying this," said David, taking from his pocket-book a small slip of paper and showing it to his companion.

Hieronymus read: "Selections from Robert Browning."

"Come, come!" he said, with a sigh of relief, "this *is* a good choice!"

"It is not my choice," said David, simply. "I don't know one fellow from the other. But the man at the shop in Ludlow told me it was a book to have. If you say so too, of course that settles the matter."

"Well," said Hieronymus, "and what about the other books?"

"I tell you what," said David, suddenly, "if you 'd come to my lodgings one day, you could look at the books I 've got, and advise me about

others. That would be the shortest and pleasantest way."

"By all means," said the historian. "Then you have not yet given away your gifts?"

"Not yet," said David, quietly. "I am waiting awhile."

And then he relapsed into silence and timidity, and went on twisting his whip.

Hieronymus was interested, but he had too much delicate feeling to push the inquiry, and not having a mathematical mind, he was quite unable to put two and two together without help from another source. So he just went on smoking his pipe, wondering all the time what possible reason his companion could have for collecting a library beginning with Mrs. Hemans.

After a remark about the weather and the crops—Hieronymus was becoming quite agricultural—David rose in an undecided kind of manner, expressed his thanks, and took his leave, but there was evidently something more he wanted to say, and yet he went away without saying it.

"I 'm sure he wants to speak about that pastry," thought Hieronymus. "Confound him ! Why does n't he ?"

The next moment the door opened, and David put his head in.

"There 's something else I wanted to say," he stammered out. "The fact is, I don't tell anybody about the books I buy. It 's my own affair, and I like to keep it to myself. But I 'm sure I can trust you."

"I should just think you could," Hieronymus answered.

So he promised secrecy, and then followed the exciseman to the door, and watched him mount his horse and ride off. Mr. Benbow was coming in at the time, and Hieronymus said some few pleasant words about David Ellis.

"He 's the nicest man in these parts," Mr. Benbow said, warmly. "We all like him. Joan Hammond will be a lucky girl if she gets him for a husband."

"Is he fond of her, then ?" asked Hieronymus,

"He has always been fond of her," Mr. Benbow answered.

Then Hieronymus, having received this valuable assistance, proceeded carefully to put two and two together.

"Now I know for whom the exciseman intends his library!" he said to himself, triumphantly.

CHAPTER VII.

AUNTIE LLOYD PROTESTS.

AUNTIE LLOYD was a material, highly prosperous individual, utterly bereft of all ideas except one ; though, to be sure, the one idea which she did possess was of overwhelming bulk, being, indeed, the sense of her own superiority over all people of all countries and all centuries. This was manifest not only in the way she spoke, but also in the way she folded her hands together on the buckle of her waist-belt, as though she were murmuring : "Thank heaven I am Auntie Lloyd, and no one else!" All her relations, and indeed all her neighbours, bowed down to her authority : it was recognised by every one that the mistress of the Tan-House Farm was a personage who must not be disobeyed in the smallest

particular. There had been one rebel in the camp for many years now: Joan. She alone had dared to raise the standard of revolt. At first she had lifted it only an inch high; but strength and courage had come with years, and now the standard floated triumphantly in the air. And to-day it reached its full height, for Auntie Lloyd had driven over to the Malt-House Farm to protest with her niece about this dictation, and Joan, though she did not use the exact words, had plainly told her to mind her own business.

Auntie Lloyd had been considerably "worked up" ever since she had heard the news that Joan went to write for a gentleman at the Green Dragon. Then she heard that Joan not only wrote for him, but was also seen walking about with him; for it was not at all likely that an episode of this description would pass without comment in Little Stretton; and Auntie Lloyd was not the only person who remarked and criticised. A bad attack of sciatica had kept her from interfering at the outset; but as

soon as she was even tolerably well, she made a descent upon the Malt-House Farm, having armed herself with the most awe-inspiring bonnet and mantle which her wardrobe could supply. But Joan was proof against such terrors. She listened to all Auntie Lloyd had to say, and merely remarked that she did not consider it was any one's affair but her own. That was the most overwhelming statement that had ever been made to Auntie Lloyd. No wonder that she felt faint.

"It is distinctly a family affair," she said, angrily. "If you 're not careful, you 'll lose the chance of David Ellis. You can't expect him to be dangling about your heels all his life. He will soon be tired waiting for your pleasure. Do you suppose that he, too, does not know you are amusing yourself with this new-comer ?"

Joan was pouring out tea at the time, and her hand trembled as she filled the cup.

"I won't have David Ellis thrust down my throat by you or by any one," she said, determinedly.

And with that she looked at her watch, and calmly said that it was time for her to be off to the Green Dragon, Mr. Howard having asked her to go in the afternoon instead of the morning. But though she left Auntie Lloyd quelled and paralysed, and was conscious that she had herself won the battle once and for all, she was very much irritated and distressed too. Hieronymus noticed that something was wrong with her.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Has Auntie Lloyd been paying a visit to the Malt-House Farm, and exasperated you beyond all powers of endurance? Or was the butter-making a failure? Or is it the same old story: general detestation of every one and everything in Little Stretton, together with an inward determination to massacre the whole village at the earliest opportunity?"

Joan smiled, and looked up at the kind face which always had such a restful influence on her.

"I suppose that *is* the root of the whole matter," she said.

"I am sorry for you," he said, gently, as he turned to his papers; "but I think you are not quite wise to let your discontent grow beyond your control. Most people, you know, when their lives are analysed, are found to have but sorry material out of which to fashion for themselves satisfaction and contentment."

Her face flushed as he spoke, and a great peace fell over her. When she was with him, all was well with her: the irritations at home, the annoyances either within or without, either real or imaginary, and indeed all worries, passed for the time out of her memory. David Ellis was forgotten, Auntie Lloyd was forgotten; the narrow, dull, every-day existence broadened out into many interesting possibilities. Life had something bright to offer to Joan. She bent happily over the pages, thoroughly enjoying her congenial task; and

now and again during the long pauses of silence, when Hieronymus was thinking out his subject, she glanced at his kind face and his silvered head.

And restless little Joan was restful.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISTANCE GROWS.

SO the days slipped away, and Joan came regularly to the Green Dragon, to write to the historian's dictation. These mornings were red-letter days in her life: she had never before had anything which she could have called companionship, and now this best of all pleasures was suddenly granted to her. She knew well that it could not last; that very soon the historian would go back into his own world, and that she would be left lonely, lonelier than ever. But meanwhile she was happy. She always felt, after having been with him, as though some sort of peace had stolen over her. It did not hold her long, this sense of peace. It was merely that quieting influence which a mellowed nature exercises at rare moments over an unmellowed na-

ture, being indeed a snatch of that wonderful restfulness which has something divine in its essence. She did not analyse her feelings for him, she dared not. She just drifted on, dreaming. And she was grateful to him too, for she had unburdened her heavy heart to him, and he had not laughed at her aspirations and ambitions. He had certainly made a little fun over her, but not in the way which conveyed contempt: on the contrary, his manner of teasing gave the impression of the kindliest sympathy. He had spoken sensible words of advice to her too; not in any formal set lecture—that would have been impossible to him,—but in detached sentences given out at different times, with words simple in themselves, but able to suggest many good and noble thoughts. At least that was what Joan gathered, that was her judgment of him, that was the effect he produced on her.

Then he was not miserly of his learning. He was not one of those scholars who keep their wisdom for their narrow and appreciative little set; he gave of his best, with royal generosity,

to every one, and he gave of his best to her. He saw that she was really interested in history, and that it pleased her to hear him talk about it. Out then came his stores of knowledge, all for her special service! But that was only half of the process; he taught her by finding out from her what she knew, and then returning her knowledge to her twofold enriched. She was eager to learn, and he was interested in her eagerness. It was his nature to be kind and chivalrous to every one, and he was therefore kind and chivalrous to his little secretary. He saw her constantly in "school-hours," as he called the time spent in dictating, and out of school-hours too. He took such an interest in all matters connected with the village that he was to be found everywhere, now gravely contemplating the cows and comparing them with Mr. Benbow's herd, now strolling through the market-place, and now passing stern criticisms on the butter and poultry, of which he knew nothing. Once he even tried to sell Joan Hammond's butter to Mrs. Benbow.

"I assure you, ma'am," he said to the landlady of the Green Dragon, "the very best cooking butter in the kingdom! Taste and see."

"But it *isn't* cooking butter!" interposed Joan, hastily.

But she laughed all the same, and Hieronymus, much humbled by his mistake, made no more attempts to sell butter.

He seemed thoroughly contented with his life at Little Stretton, and in no hurry to join his friends in Wales. He was so genial that every one liked him and spoke well of him. If he was driving in the pony-carriage and saw any children trudging home after school, he would find room for four or five of them and take them back in triumph to the village. If he met an old woman carrying a bundle of wood, he immediately transferred the load from herself, to himself, and walked along by her side, chatting merrily the while. As for the tramps who passed on the high-road from Ludlow to Church Stretton, they found in him a sympathetic

friend. His hand was always in his pocket for them. He listened to their tales of woe, and stroked the "property" baby in the perambulator, and absolutely refused to be brought to order by Mrs. Benbow, who declared that she knew more about tramps than he did, and that the best thing to do with them was to send them about their business as soon as possible.

"You will ruin the reputation of the Green Dragon," she said, "if you go on entertaining tramps outside. Take your friends over to the other inn!"

She thought that this would be a strong argument, as Hieronymus was particularly proud of the Green Dragon, having discovered that it was patronised by the aristocrats of the village, and considered infinitely superior to its rival the Crown Inn opposite.

But the historian, so yielding in other respects, continued his intimacies with the tramps, sometimes even leaving his work if he chanced to see an interesting-looking wanderer slouching past the Green Dragon. Joan had become accus-

tomed to these interruptions. She just sat waiting patiently until Hieronymus came back, and plunged once more into the History of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, or the Attitude of the Foreign Powers to each other during the latter Years of Henry VIII.

"I 'm a troublesome fellow," he would say to her sometimes, "and you are very patient with me. In fact, you 're a regular little brick of a secretary."

Then she would flush with pleasure to hear his words of praise. But he never noticed that, and never thought he was leading her farther and farther away from her surroundings and ties, and putting great distances between herself and the exciseman.

So little did he guess it, that one day he even ventured to joke with her. He had been talking to her about John Richard Green, the historian, and he asked her whether she had read *A Short History of the English People*. She told him she had never read it.

"Oh, you ought to have that book," he said:

and he immediately thought that he would buy it for her. Then he remembered the exciseman's library, and judged that it would be better to let him buy it for her.

"I hear you have a very devoted admirer in the exciseman," Hieronymus said, slyly.

"How do you know that?" Joan said, sharply.

"Oh," he answered, "I was told." But he saw that his volcanic little companion was not too pleased; and so he began talking again of John Richard Green. He told her about the man himself, his work, his suffering, his personality. He told her how the young men at Oxford were advised to travel on the Continent to expand their minds, and if they could not afford this advantage after their university career, then they were to *read John Richard Green.* He told her, too, of the grave at Mentone, with the simple words, "He died learning."

Thus he would talk to her, taking her always into a new world of interest. Then she was in an enchanted kingdom, and he was the magician.

It was a world in which agriculture and dairy-farming and all the other wearinesses of her every-day life had no part. Some people might think it was but a poor enchanted realm which he conjured up for her pleasure. But enchantment, like every other emotion, is but relative after all. Some little fragment of intellectuality had long been Joan's idea of enchantment. And now it had come to her in a way altogether unexpected, and in a measure beyond all her calculations. It had come to her, bringing with it something else.

She seemed in a dream during that time: yes, she was slipping farther away from her own people, and farther away from the exciseman. She had never been very near to him, but lately the distance had become doubled. When she chanced to meet him, her manner was more than ordinarily cold. If he had chosen to plead for himself, he might well have asked what he had done to her that he should deserve to be treated with such bare unfriendliness.

One day he met her. She was riding the

great white horse, and David rode along beside her. She chatted with him now and again, but there were long pauses of silence between them.

"Father has made up his mind to sell old Nance," she said suddenly, as she stroked the old mare's head. "This is my last ride on her."

"I am sorry," said David, kindly. "She 's an old friend, is n't she ?"

"I suppose it is ridiculous to care so much," Joan said ; "but you know we 've had her such a time. And I used to hang round her neck, and she would lift me up and swing me."

"I remember," said David, eagerly. "I 've often watched you. I was always afraid you would have a bad fall."

"You ran up and caught me once," Joan said. "And I was so angry ; for it was n't likely that old Nance would have let me fall."

"But how could I be sure that the little arms were strong enough to cling firmly to old Nance's neck ?" David said. "So I could n't help being anxious."

"Do you remember when I was lost in that

mist," Joan said, "and you came and found me, and carried me home? I was so angry that you would not let me walk."

"You have often been angry with me," David said, quietly.

Joan made no answer. She just shrugged her shoulders.

There they were, these two, riding side by side, and yet they were miles apart from each other. David knew it, and grieved.

CHAPTER IX.

DAVID LAMENTS.

DAVID knew it, and grieved. He knew that Joan's indifference was growing apace, and that it had taken to itself alarming proportions ever since the historian had been at the Green Dragon. He had constantly met Joan and Hieronymus together, and heard of them being together, and of course he knew that Joan wrote to the historian's dictation. He never spoke on the subject to any one. Once or twice, Auntie Lloyd tried to begin, but he looked straight before him and appeared not to understand. Once or twice, some other of the folk made mention of the good-fellowship which existed between Joan and the historian.

"Well, it 's natural enough," he said, quietly. "Joan was always fond of books, and one feels

glad she can talk about them with some one who is real clever."

But was he glad? Poor David! Time after time he looked at his little collection of books, handling the volumes just as tenderly as one handles one's memories, or one's hopes, or one's old affections. He had not added to the library since he had spoken to Hieronymus and asked his advice on the choice of suitable subjects. He had no heart to go on with a hobby which seemed to have no comfort in it.

To-night he sat in his little sitting-room smoking his pipe. He looked at his books as usual, and then locked them up in his oak chest. He sat thinking of Joan and Hieronymus. There was no bitterness in David's heart; there was only sorrow. He shared with others a strong admiration for Hieronymus, an admiration which the historian never failed to win, though it was often quite unconsciously given, and always quiet unconsciously received. So there was only sorrow in David's heart, and no bitterness.

The clock was striking seven of the evening, when some one knocked at the door, and Hieronymus came into the room. He was in a particularly genial mood, and puffed his pipe in great contentment. He settled down by the fireside as though he had been there all his life, and chatted away so freely that David forgot his own melancholy in his pleasure at having such a bright companion. A bottle of whisky was produced, and the cosiness was complete.

"Now for the books!" said Hieronymus. "I am quite anxious to see your collection. And look here: I have made a list of suitable books which any one would like to have. Now show me what you have already bought."

David's misery returned all in a rush, and he hesitated.

"I don't think I care about the books now," he said.

"What nonsense!" said Hieronymus. "You're not shy about showing them to me? I am sure you have bought some capital good ones."

"Oh, it was n't that," said David, quietly, as he unlocked the oak chest, and took out the precious volumes and laid them on the table. In spite of himself, however, some of the old eagerness came over him, and he stood by, waiting anxiously for the historian's approval. Hieronymus groaned over Mrs. Hemans's poetry, and Locke's *Human Understanding*, and Defoe's *History of the Plague*, and Cowper, and Hannah More. He groaned inwardly, but outwardly he gave grunts of encouragement. He patted David on the shoulder when he found *Selections from Browning*, and he almost caressed him when he discovered *Silas Marner*.

Yes, David was proud of his treasures: each one of them represented to him a whole world of love and hope and consolation.

Hieronymus knew for whom the books were intended, and he was touched by the exciseman's quiet devotion and pride. He would not on any account have hurt David's feelings; he would have praised the books, however unsuitable they might have seemed to him.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you 've done capitally by yourself. You 've chosen some excellent books. Still, this list may help you to go on, and I should advise you to begin with Green's *History of the English People*."

David put the volumes back into the oak chest.

"I don't think I care about buying any more," he said, sadly. "It 's no use."

"Why?" asked Hieronymus.

David looked at the historian's frank face, and felt the same confidence in him which all felt. He looked, and knew that his man was loyal and good.

"Well, it 's just this," David said, quite simply. "I 've loved her ever since she was a baby-child. She was my own little sweetheart then. I took care of her when she was a wee thing, and I wanted to look after her when she was a grown woman. It has just been the hope of my life to make Joan my wife."

He paused a moment, and looked straight into the fire.

"I know she is different from others, and cleverer than any of us here, and all that. I know she is always longing to get away from Little Stretton. But I thought that perhaps we might be happy together, and that then she would not want to go. But I 've never been quite sure. I 've just watched and waited. I 've loved her all her life. When she was a wee baby I carried her about, and knew how to stop her crying. She has always been kinder to me than to any one else. It was perhaps that which helped me to be patient. At least, I knew she did not care for any one else. It was just that she did n't seem to turn to any one."

He had moved away from Hieronymus, and stood knocking out the ashes from his pipe.

Hieronymus was silent.

"At least, I knew she did not care for any one else," continued David, "until you came. Now she cares for you."

Hieronymus looked up quickly.

"Surely, surely you must be mistaken," he said.

David shook his head.

"No," he answered, "I 'm not mistaken. And I 'm not the only one who has noticed it. Since you 've been here, my little Joan has gone farther and farther away from me."

"I am sorry," said Hieronymus. He had taken his tobacco-pouch from his pocket, and was slowly filling his pipe.

"I have never meant to work a harm to her or you, or any one," the historian said, sadly. "If I had thought I was going to bring trouble to any one here, I should not have stayed on. But I 've been very happy amongst you all, and you 've all been good to me; and as the days went on, I found myself becoming attached to this little village. The life was so simple and refreshing, and I was glad to have the rest and the change. Your little Joan and I have been much together, it is true. She has written to my dictation, and I found her so apt that, long after my hand became well again, I preferred to dictate rather than to write. Then we 've walked together, and we 've talked seriously and merrily, and sadly too.

We 've just been comrades : nothing more. She seemed to me a little discontented, and I tried to interest her in things I happen to know, and so take her out of herself. If I had had any idea that I was doing more than that, I should have left off at once. I hope you don't doubt me."

"I believe every word you say," David said, warmly.

"I am grateful for that," Hieronymus said, and the two men grasped hands.

"If there is anything I could do to repair my thoughtlessness," he said, "I will gladly do it. But it is difficult to know what to do and what to say. For perhaps, after all, you may be mistaken."

The exciseman shook his head.

"No," he said, "I am not mistaken. It has been getting worse ever since you came. There is nothing to say about it ; it can't be helped. It 's just that sort of thing which sometimes happens : no one is to blame, but the mischief is done, all the same. I don't know why I've told you about it. Perhaps I meant to, perhaps

I did n't. It seemed to come out naturally enough when we were talking of the books."

He was looking mournfully at the list which Hieronymus had drawn out for him.

"I don't see that it 's any use to me," he said.

He was going to screw it up and throw it into the fire, but the historian prevented him.

"Keep it," he said, kindly. "You may yet want it. If I were you, I should go on collecting a library. I should go on patiently adding book after book, and with each book you buy, buy a little hope too. Who knows? Some day your little Joan may want you. But she will have to go out into the world first and fight her battles. She is one of those who *must* go out into the world and buy her experiences for herself. Those who hinder her, are only hurting her. Don't try to hinder her. Let her go. Some day when she is tired, she will be glad to lean on some one whom she can trust. But she must be tired first, and thus find out her necessity. And it is when we find out our necessity that our heart cries aloud. Then it is

that those who love us will not fail us. They will be to us like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

David made no answer, but he smoothed out the crumpled piece of paper and put it carefully into his pocket-book.

CHAPTER X.

HIERONYMUS SPEAKS.

HIERONYMUS was unhappy: the excise-man might or might not be mistaken, but the fact remained that some mischief had been done, inasmuch as David Ellis's feelings were wounded. Hieronymus felt that the best thing for him to do was to go, though he quite determined to wait until he saw the hill-ponies gathered together. There was no reason why he should hasten away as though he were ashamed of himself. He knew that not one word had been spoken to Joan which he now wished to recall. His position was a delicate one. He thought seriously over the matter, and wondered how he might devise a means of telling her a little about his own life, and thus showing her, without seeming to show, her that his whole

heart was filled with the memories of the past. He could not say to Joan : "My little Joan, my little secretary, they tell me that I have been making havoc of your heart. Now listen to me, child. If it is not true, then I am glad. And if it is true, I am sad : because I have been wounding you against my knowledge, and putting you through suffering which I might so easily have spared you. You will recover from the suffering ; but alas ! little Joan, that I should have been the one to wound you !"

He could not say that to her, though he would have wished to speak some such words.

But the next morning after his conversation with David Ellis, he sat in the parlour of the Green Dragon, fondling the ever-faithful Gamboge. Joan Hammond looked up once or twice from her paper, wondering when the historian would begin work. He seemed to be taking a long time this morning to rouse himself to activity.

"I shall take Gamboge with me when I go," he said at last. "I 've bought her for half-a-

crown. That is a paltry sum to give for such a precious creature."

"Are you thinking of going then?" asked Joan, fearfully.

"Yes," he answered. "I must just wait to see those rascals the hill-ponies, and then I must go back to the barbarous big world, into which you are so anxious to penetrate."

"Father has determined to sell Nance," she said, sadly, "so I can't saddle the white horse and be off."

"And you are sorry to lose your old friend?" he said, kindly.

"One has to give up everything," she answered.

"Not everything," Hieronymus said. "Not the nasty things, for instance—only the nice things!"

Joan laughed, and dipped her pen into the ink.

"The truth of it is, I'm not in the least inclined to work this morning," said Hieronymus.

Joan waited, the pen in her hand. He had

said that so many times before, and yet he had always ended by doing some work after all.

"I believe that my stern task-mistress, my dear love who died so many years ago, I believe that even she would give me a holiday to-day," Hieronymus said. "And she always claimed so much work of me; she was never satisfied. I think she considered me to be a lazy fellow, who needed spurring on. She had great ambitions for me; she believed everything of me, and wished me to work out her ambitions, not for the sake of the fame and the name, but for the sake of the good it does us all to grapple with ourselves."

He had drawn from his pocket a small miniature of a sweet-looking woman. It was a spiritual face, with tender eyes: a face to linger in one's memory.

"When she first died," Hieronymus continued, as though to himself, "I could not have written a line without this dear face before me. It served to remind me that although I was unhappy and lonely, I must work if only to please

her. That is what I had done when she was alive, and it seemed disloyal not to do so when she was dead. And it was the only comfort I had; but a strong comfort, filling full the heart. It is ten years now since she died; but I scarcely need the miniature; the dear face is always before me. Ten years ago, and I am still alive, and sometimes, often indeed, very happy. She would have wished me to be happy: she was always glad when I laughed heartily, or made some fun out of nothing. 'What a stupid boy you are!' she would say. But she laughed all the same. We were very happy together, she and I; we had loved each other a long time, in spite of many difficulties and troubles. But the troubles had cleared, and we were just going to make our little home together, when she died."

There was no tremor in his voice as he spoke.

"We enjoyed everything," he went on; "every bit of fun, every bit of beauty,—the mere fact of living and loving, the mere fact of the world being beautiful, the mere fact of there

being so much to do and to strive after. I was not very ambitious for myself. At one time I *had* cared greatly ; then the desire had left me. But when she first came into my life, she roused me from my lethargy ; she loved me, and did not wish me to pause one moment in my life's work. The old ambitions had left me, but for her sake I revived them ; she was my dear good angel, but always, as I told her, a stern taskgiver. Then when she was gone, and I had not her dear presence to help me, I just felt I could not go on writing any more. Then I remembered how ambitious she was for me, and so I did not wait one moment. I took up my work at once, and have tried to earn a name and a fame for her sake."

He paused, and stirred the fire uneasily.

" It was very difficult at first," he continued ; " everything was difficult. And even now, after ten years, it is not always easy. And I cared so little. That was the hardest part of all : to learn to care again. But the years pass, and we live through a tempest of grief, and come out

into a great calm. In the tempest we fancied we were alone; in the calm we know that we have not been alone: that the dear face has been looking at us lovingly, and the dear voice speaking to us through the worst hours of the storm, and the dear soul knitting itself closer and closer to our soul."

Joan bent over the paper.

"So the days have passed into weeks and months and years," he said, "and here am I, still looking for my dear love's blessing and approval; still looking to her for guidance, to her and no one else. Others may be able to give their heart twice over, but I am not one of those. People talk of death effacing love! As though death and love could have any dealings the one with the other! They always were strangers; they always will be strangers. So year after year I mourn for her, in my own way, happily, sorrowfully, and always tenderly; sometimes with laughter, and sometimes with tears. When I see all the beautiful green things of the world, and sing from very delight, I know she would be

glad. When I make a good joke or turn a clever sentence, I know she would smile her praise. When I do my work well, I know she would be satisfied. And though I may fail in all I undertake, still there is the going on trying. Thus I am always a mourner, offering to her just that kind of remembrance which her dear beautiful soul would cherish most."

He was handling the little miniature.

"May I see the face?" Joan asked, very gently.

He put the miniature in her hands. She looked at it, and then returned it to him, almost reverently.

"And now, little secretary," he said, in his old bright way, "I do believe I could do some work if I tried. It 's only a question of will-power. Come, dip your pen in the ink, and write as quickly as you can."

He dictated for nearly an hour, and then Joan slipped off quickly home.

Up in her little bedroom it was all in vain that she chased the tears from her face. They came again, and they came again.

"He has seen that I love him," she sobbed. "And that was his dear kind way of telling me that I was a foolish little child. Of course I was a foolish little child, but I could n't help it! Indeed I could n't help it. And I must go on crying. No one need know."

So she went on crying, and no one knew.

CHAPTER XI.

HIERONYMUS GOES.

THEY were captured, those little wretches the hill-ponies, having been chased down from all directions, and gathered together in the enclosure set apart for their imprisonment. There they were, cabin'd, cribb'd, and confin'd, some of them distressed, and all of them highly indignant at the rough treatment which they had received. This gathering together of the wild ponies occurred two or three times in the year, when the owners assembled to identify their particular herd, and to re-impress their mark on the ponies which belonged to them. It was no easy matter to drive them down from the hills; though indeed they came down willingly enough at night to seek what they might devour. Then one might hear their little feet pattering quickly

over the ground, helter-skelter! The villagers were well accustomed to the sound. "It 's only the hill-ponies, the rascals!" they would say. But when they were wanted, they would not come. They led the beaters a rare dance over hill and dale; but it always ended in the same way. Then, after four or five years of life on the hills, their owners sold them, and that was the end of all their fun, and all their shagginess too.

Hieronymus stood near the enclosure watching the proceedings with the greatest interest. The men were trying to divide the ponies into groups, according to the mark on their backs. But this was no easy matter either: the little creatures kicked and threw themselves about in every direction but the right one, and they were so strong that their struggles were generally successful. The sympathies of Hieronymus went with the rebels, and he was much distressed when he saw three men hanging on to the tail of one of the ponies, and trying to keep him back from another group.

"I say, you there!" he cried, waving his stick. "I can't stand that."

Mrs. Benbow, who was standing near him, laughed, and called him to order.

"Now don't you be meddling with what you don't understand," she said. "You may know a good deal about books, but it 's not much you 'll know about hill-ponies."

"That 's quite true," said Hieronymus, humbly.

"Come along with me now," commanded Mrs. Benbow, "and help me buy a red pig!"

Nothing but a red pig would have made Hieronymus desert the hill-ponies. A red pig was of course irresistible to any one in his senses; and the historian followed contentedly after the landlady of the Green Dragon. She made her way amongst the crowds of people who had come to this great horse-fair, which was the most important one of the whole year. Hieronymus was much interested in everyone and everything he saw; he looked at the horses and sheep and cows, and exchanged conversation with any one who would talk to him.

"There 's a deal of money will change hands to-day," said a jolly old farmer to him. "But prices be dreadful low this year. Why, the pigs be going for a mere nothing."

"I 'm going to buy a pig," Hieronymus said, proudly, "a red one."

"Ah!" said the farmer, looking at him with a sort of indulgent disdain, "'t is a breed as I care nothing about."

Then he turned to one of his colleagues, evidently considering Hieronymus rather a feeble kind of individual, with whom it was not profitable to talk.

The historian was depressed for the moment, but soon recovered his spirits when he saw the fascinating red pigs. And his pride and conceit knew no bounds when Mrs. Benbow actually chose and bought the very animal which he had recommended to her notice. He saw David Ellis, and went to tell him about the pig. The exciseman laughed, and then looked sad again.

"My little Joan is very unhappy," he said,

half in a whisper. "The old white horse is to be sold. Do you see her there yonder? How I wish I could buy the old mare and give her to Joan!"

"That would be a very unwise thing for you to do," said Hieronymus.

"Yes," said David, "And do you know, I've been thinking of what you said about her going out into the world. And I found this advertisement. Shall I give it to her?"

Hieronymus looked at it.

"You're a dear fellow, David," he said, warmly. "Yes, give it to her. And I too have been thinking of what you said to me. I've told her a little of my story, and she knows now how my heart is altogether taken up with my past. So if I've done any harm to her and you, I have tried to set it right. And to-morrow I am going home. You will see me off at the station?"

"I'll be there," said the exciseman.

But there was no sign in his manner that he wished to be rid of Hieronymus. The histo-

rian, who all unconsciously won people's hearts, all unconsciously kept them too. Even Auntie Lloyd, to whom he had been presented, owned that he "had a way" about him. (But then he had asked after her sciatica!)

He spoke a few words to Joan, who stood lingering near the old white mare. She had been a little shy of him since he had talked so openly to her; and he had noticed this, and used all his geniality to set her at her ease again.

"This is my last afternoon," he said to her, "and I have crowned the achievements of my visit here by choosing a red pig. Now I 'm going back to the big barbarous world to boast of my new acquirements: brewing beer, eating pastry, drinking beef-tea, cutting up the beans, making onion pickles, and other odd jobs assigned to me by Queen Elizabeth of the Green Dragon. Here she comes to fetch me, for we are going to drive the red pig home in the cart. Then I 'm to have some tea with rum in it, and some of those horrible Shropshire crumpets. Then if I 'm still alive after the

crumpets and the rum, there will be a few more odd jobs for me to do, and then to-morrow I go. As for yourself, little secretary, you are going to put courage into your heart, and fight your battles well. Tell me ?"

"Yes," she said ; and she looked up brightly, though there were tears in her eyes.

"Do you know those words, '*Hitch your waggon to a star*'?" he said. "Emerson was right. The waggon spins along merrily then. And now good-bye, little secretary. You must come and see me off at the station to-morrow. I want all my friends around me."

So on the morrow they gathered round him : Mr. Benbow, Mrs. Benbow, two of the Malt-House Farm boys, the old woman who kept the grocer's shop and who had been doing a good trade in sweetmeats since Hieronymus came, the exciseman, and Joan Hammond, and old John of the wooden leg. They were all there, sorrowful to part with him, glad to have known him.

"If you would only stay," said Mrs. Benbow,

"there are so many other odd jobs for you to do!"

"No, I must go," said the historian. "There is an end to everything, excepting to your beef-tea! But I've been very happy."

His luggage had increased since he came to Little Stretton. He had arrived with a small portmanteau; he went away with the same portmanteau, an oak chair which Mr. Benbow had given him, and a small hamper containing Gamboge.

"Take care how you carry that hamper," he said to the porter. "There is a dog inside undergoing a cat incarnation!"

To Joan he said: "Little secretary, answer the advertisement and go out into the world."

And she promised.

And to David he said: "When you've finished that book-list, write to me for another one."

And he promised.

Then the train moved off, and the dear kind face was out of sight.

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Mrs. Benbow went home to do the scouring and cleaning.

David rode off to Ludlow and bought a book.

Joan sat in her room at the Malt-House Farm and cried her heart out. Then she looked at the advertisement, and answered it.

"It was kind of David," she said.

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So David sent Joan out into the world.

The weeks, the months, seem long without her. He buys his books, and with every new book he buys new comfort. He recalls the historian's words: "Some day, when she is tired, she will be glad to lean on some one whom she can trust."

So David waits.

THE

PAINTER AND HIS PICTURE

THE
PAINTER AND HIS PICTURE.

THERE was once an artist. He was the only son of a pious mother, whose consolation in times of trouble had been her unquestioning faith in God.

When he was still a child and his talent had begun to show itself, she said within herself :

" My son, my Pierre, will paint pictures of the Holy Mother, and the Saints, and the Blessèd Christ. There have been great religious painters before him, but he will be great too ; and he will devote his talent to the service of the Church."

That was what she wished for him. She told him what she wished him to do and to be ; and he, aglow with her enthusiasm, and himself

ardent by nature, caught the spirit of her meaning, and kept it in his heart for many years, even after she had passed away.

"I will be a painter of sacred subjects," he said to himself.

Then the time went by, and he earned for himself fame by his pictures of the Madonna and the Saints, and many scenes from Bible History, and the weeping Magdalene.

And a picture of Christ saying to the woman taken in adultery: "Woman, where are those thine accusers?"

There was the mark of piety and enthusiasm in his work. It was not merely that he painted a picture, but that he *believed what he painted.*

Then one day he began a picture of the Crucifixion. It was for some altar. He intended to show God the Father supporting the arms of God the Son.

God's face was to be the tenderest that human heart could imagine and human hand depict: God who sent the trials, but at the same time lent his own great holy strength to help us to

bear the trials. The painter had seen an old stained-glass window of this subject: it was quaint and grotesque. But his picture was to be something poetical; yet so true, that no one looking at it could believe that God was not our Helper.

But the painter lived in an age of unbelief. The old faith, which had been so much to so many thousands, was fast losing its power.

When he first began to think more deeply about religion, he smiled at the unbelievers. He scoffed at them, as many have done before.

"Wait," they said to him, "your turn will come. To those who think at all, there comes this time of unbelief. Some struggle out of their doubts—so they convince themselves—and get back to their old faith, because they cannot do without it. Others, braver, face the future calmly, and learn to be strong without the help of religious stimulant. Your turn will come."

But he shook his head, and went confidently back to his work: to his Saints and Madonnas, and dead Christs.

Until one day.

And on that day the brush fell from his hand. He could not paint God the Father supporting the arms of God the Son.

The Son—who was He?

The Father—who was He? Had he ever been known to give us help and strength in hours of need? Even supposing he fashioned the earth, what was he doing now? Did he, would he, hear the cries of distress to which stricken humanity gave utterance every day?

The painter put away his brush. The light of life had faded from his heart. He turned to books, and read and read, and every day his brain grew more bewildered. He was seeking in books for the meaning of the great problem: that problem which has distracted so many brains, and stronger ones than the painter's.

Those who knew him watched him. His turn had come. Would he struggle back to his old faith, or would he become a free man? So the time went by. The picture of the Father supporting the arms of the Son was put aside.

The painter had wished at first to burn it; but he just let it lie there with other unfinished pictures. So it lay there.

And the painter, who had freed himself from his old bondage, took up his brush once more, and painted secular subjects. He laughed at his own old self.

"To think that I clung so long to rotten garments!" he said. "To think that I have been deceived by fairy stories, foolish traditions, and time-honoured gossip! To think that all these years, reason, man's most glorious possession, has been stifled and wellnigh choked by traditional sentiment! But now I breathe, and am free. Now I see that man is God, and that in him is resident all strength and power and greatness. Man stands alone: for himself and by himself will he work out his own salvation. God is the great myth, the great delusion."

Meanwhile he worked at his new pictures. Now and again he was asked to paint an altar-piece.

"Nay, I have done with pale-faced Saints and

Madonnas," he would say. "The legends of the Bible have no meaning for me now. I cannot paint what I cannot believe."

"Yet the legends of the Bible are beautiful," said some one to him. "And surely to the artist, all beautiful subjects should be acceptable. What has mere creed to do with art? Art should know no limitation."

But the painter shook his head.

"My faith has gone," he said. "I cannot paint your altar-pieces. God, the Holy Mother, the Blessèd Christ, are empty names to me now. They belonged to my dark Past. They have no part in my clearer Present."

Thus he gloried in his new-found freedom. He preached the gospel of soul-emancipation.

"Ye slaves of dogma and doctrine, throw off your fetters and be men!" he cried.

He had all the enthusiasm and exaggeration of a convert.

For years men had been saying these very words to their fellow-men. Hundreds of years ago, men had thrown off the various fetters of

the various dogmas, and had bravely faced the desolation of loneliness which freedom gives as its inseparable gift.

Yet the painter thought he was the only free man. But that is a way we all have. We think we have unearthed some rare treasure. Like children, we hasten to show what we have found. And countless ages before we were born, countless men have unearthed that very treasure, each one for himself.

So the painter with his freedom.

One day an old man came to the painter's studio. He was a man well known in certain circles as a great thinker and philosopher. Some people called him an atheist; but these were ignorant folk. But others who understood better, called him one of those "to whom God whispers in the ear."

His eye chanced to light on the unfinished picture of God the Father supporting the arms of God the Son.

The painter hastened to make excuses for this picture.

"It belonged to my Past," he said. "I was painting it, when all at once I began to doubt. And then reason got the better of my sentiment. So I laid the picture aside. I meant to burn it. But it had represented a certain amount of work, and I had not the heart to destroy it. So I let it lie. But some day I shall destroy it."

Then the old man touched the painter on the arm.

"Nay, nay," he said, gently. "Do not destroy it. Some day, when you least think it, you will wish that picture."

"You do not believe in my stability?" said the painter. "You think that I am one of those who creep back thankfully to the bosom of the Church?"

The old man smiled tenderly.

"My son, my son," he whispered, "you and I need our God. We go back to him and learn to know him only when we have freed ourselves from the dogmas and doctrines which have risen up as barriers between him and us. We

leap over the barriers, and the impetus takes us farther than was necessary. Then we retrace those few steps—but they are not quickly retraced,—and then we find God: that great Mystery which we call by different names, yet always meaning God. You will finish your picture, my son. You wonder at my words, but you will yet finish it: thinking different thoughts, working in a different spirit: yet at the same picture."

And the painter shook his head.

"Never," he said; "never!"

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But one day in the years that came afterwards, he chanced to look among his old canvases. And there lay the picture of God the Father supporting God the Son.

Time had mellowed the painter: time which includes in its power suffering.

The words of the old philosopher, now dead, stole across his memory, like some sweet sound remembered.

And the painter set to work, lovingly and patiently. A great peace came over him as he worked. He had begun the picture as a Fact, a Reality : he finished it as a Symbol.

God was that Power, greater than ourselves, or the noblest part of ourselves, without which we could not struggle and conquer.

Christ was man : any man or any woman making or attempting to make a noble thing of life.

There was an expression of ineffable tenderness on the face of the Father.

And there was a strange mixture of suffering and confidence on the face of the Son.

One might have expected him to whisper : " I suffer, but all is well with me " ; just as sick people, in the midst of their pain, look up and smile, as though to give reassuring courage to the watchers.

It was a beautiful picture : the work of a peaceful and pious mind.

This was the last picture the artist ever painted.

THE UMBRELLA-MENDER

A STUDY

THE UMBRELLA-MENDER.

IT was a winter's evening. The clock of St. Sepulchre was striking six as Mr. Coriolanus Crocker, the umbrella-mender, rose from his bench, laid aside his work, and shut up his shop. He then retired into the little inner room, made some tea, contrived a sandwich, and settled himself down to an evening's enjoyment with his books. In a few minutes he was lost in the dear delights of Grote's *Greece*; for Mr. Crocker was a scholar, and looked such, even when he was repairing umbrellas. One might have expected him at any given minute to put away his work, and deliver a lecture on some abstruse subject: perhaps on the political aspects of the reign of Thothmes the Third, or

on the Potentialities of the Differential Calculus. One might have expected this in vain, since Mr. Crocker was as sparing of his words as most rich people are of their money. He was short and shrivelled, and not unlike a thin umbrella, a threadbare, shabbily-genteel umbrella, with an uncompromising handle, and a long-drawn piece of elastic, and an ancient button, and a well-worn stick which wanted re-tipping.

Mr. Crocker had a small face provided with small piercing eyes. His hair was brown and scanty. He had a habit of combing back this hair with his thin hand when he was engaged in contemplating an invalid umbrella, and wondering whether it was worth a new stick, or a new handle, or a new frame, or a new silk or alpaca covering.

A piece of paper pasted on Mr. Crocker's window announced that no customers were wanted after six o'clock, and the neighbours had learned that it was no light matter to disturb the umbrella-mender when once the shut-

ters of the little shop had been put up. He was thus usually enabled to enjoy Grote's *Greece* without any possible fear of business-annoyances.

But this evening, just as he was finishing an account of the battle of Salamis, there came a loud ring at the shop-bell. Mr. Crocker did not pay the slightest active attention to this appeal, but no doubt he was conscious of the disturbance, for he looked up from his book, cast a few indignant glances towards the shop-door, and then poured himself out another cup of tea, and returned to Grote and Greece. The bell rang again, this time louder and more impatiently. Mr. Coriolanus Crocker read on quietly. But when the bell pealed a third time, he darted into the shop, opened the door hurriedly, and said :

"I won't have any customers after six o'clock. There 's another umbrella-mender at the top of the road. Go to him, and if he won't do your work, go to the devil, for all I care !"

"I am inclined to think I have arrived at the

destination you mention," said the ringer of the bell. "Allow me, however, to assure you that I am not a customer, and have not come to see you about anything so uninteresting as umbrellas. Probably you do not realise that it is snowing. I can understand that, for you are standing out of the snow, and I am standing in the snow. Thank you, I will step in and tell you my business."

Mr. Crocker raised the lamp to the stranger's face. He looked about thirty years of age, and had the appearance of being an unsuccessful artist.

"I don't know you," said Mr. Crocker, putting the lamp on the counter. "Please to tell me your business and then go; for my time is precious, and I don't care to waste it on strangers."

"I will be brief," answered the stranger, taking a ring from his pocket. "This is your son's ring. You recognise it? Well, then, he is dying, and wishes to see you before he says farewell to this world. You 'll excuse me, but I think we have

not much time to lose. He was well on the road when I left him."

"My son dying," murmured the umbrella-mender, as though to himself, "and dying he turns to me. I am glad of that."

"I am ready," he said to the artist. He took his hat from the peg, and together with the stranger passed out of the shop.

"You are my son's friend, no doubt?" he asked.

"No," replied the other, curtly. "I 'm low enough, but I have not sunk to that degradation yet."

"Do you refer to his personal character or to his father's profession?" asked the umbrella-mender, fiercely.

"I 've nothing against his father's profession," answered the stranger. "For my part, I should think it is much better fun having umbrellas to mend than having no pictures to paint. You get bread and cheese on the one, but you starve on the other. Then you die and go to hell, and not a soul cares,"

Then there was silence between them, and the snow fell fast and thick.

"I suppose you loved your son once?" the stranger said, after a pause.

"I have always loved my son," the umbrella-mender answered.

"I wonder he did not turn out a better man, if he had some one to care for him. That ought to make such a difference to a fellow," said the stranger, sadly.

"You are hard on the dying," said the umbrella-mender.

"I hate your son!" muttered the stranger. "I hate him. He has come between me and all my chances of success and happiness. And when he is dead, I shall have to go after him, for it was my hand that struck him down."

Mr. Crocker started back.

"Your hand?" he cried. "And you dare to tell me this!"

"Why not?" said the other, coolly. "I don't value my life at a brass farthing. We've got to

die, and it really does not matter much whether we die on the gallows or on a feather-bed. We have only a few steps to go now. We cross the road, and turn down that narrow street opposite. I beg of you to take my arm, sir ; the roads are slippery, and you may fall."

The umbrella-mender shook off the stranger's arm.

" Don't *touch* me," he said, with a shudder.

" I can understand you are naturally annoyed with me," replied the other. " It would be too absurd to suppose that a man would be friends with a stranger who has murdered his son. Follow me now."

They had arrived at a wretched house. The door was opened by a little girl, who slunk away immediately. They groped their way up some rickety stairs, and went into a darkened room. The artist struck a match and lit a candle and held it over the bed.

" Your son is still alive," he whispered to the umbrella-mender. " I am glad we are not too

late. I feared we should just miss him." Then he closed the door gently, leaving the umbrella-mender bending over his son.

"Marius!" the father whispered, as he took his son's hand and kissed it tenderly. "Marius, you know me?"

The dying man looked up.

"Dad!" he murmured, "I've not been much of a credit to you. Poor dad! and you hoped for so much from me. Well, it's too late now. But just kneel down, dad, and let my head rest on your arm. Just like that."

And he died, with a peaceful smile on his face. He had been nothing but a sorrow to his father, nothing but a shame. His short life had been crowded with crimes of every description, except murder. He did not understand anything about affection, or gratitude, or honour. But all the same, he died with a peaceful smile on his face, his head resting, childlike, on his father's arm.

Half an hour afterwards, the artist came back into the room and found the umbrella-mender kneeling by the bedside. The candle had burned

very low, and the fire sent forth but a feeble flicker. It was bitterly cold.

The artist spoke gently to the umbrella-mender.

"I see your son is dead," he said, "and of course I hold myself responsible for his death, and am prepared to pay any penalty. But meanwhile you are shivering with cold. Let me persuade you to come nearer to the fireplace, and to wrap yourself in this rug until I have succeeded in rekindling the fire. The snow is still falling fast, and the ground is covered with a white garment. But it won't long remain white—that 's the pity of it. Do not you think so?"

The umbrella-mender withdrew his arm from beneath his son's head, and suffered the stranger to lead him to the fireside and help him into an easy-chair. There was a look of intense pain on the umbrella-mender's face. He watched his son's murderer kneel down and attend to the fire; he watched every bit of stick put on to it, and once he stooped forward and picked up a

bit which had fallen from the bundle, and he himself threw it into the fire. But the fire would not draw, and so the stranger fetched a newspaper, and he and the umbrella-mender held it before the grate, until their patience and perseverance were rewarded by success.

"It would be no trouble for me to make you some coffee," said the stranger. "I was always famous for my coffee. Your son used to praise it."

"Thank you," said the umbrella-mender, half-dreamily. "I should like some. I always enjoy a good cup of coffee. One does not often get it good in England."

"I suppose you don't object to my smoking here?" asked the stranger. "If you think it is not quite reverent, just tell me so, and I shall understand."

"Smoke by all means," replied the umbrella-mender, watching the young man not unkindly.

The bright light of the fire fell full on his handsome face; there was no expression of viciousness or wickedness, but a sort of dull

sadness, as though the young man had honestly tried to make a good thing of life, and all the world had been against him.

"Perhaps you will allow me to offer you a cigarette," suggested the stranger. "Your son gave me these cigarettes a fortnight ago. They are not strong. Try them."

"Thank you," said the umbrella-mender, "but I do not smoke now."

The stranger nodded pleasantly, and put the cigarettes back on the mantelshelf. He moved about very quietly preparing the coffee, and in a few minutes the comforting fragrance filled the room. The umbrella-mender lifted the cup to his lips, and drank long and deep.

"That was very refreshing," he said to the stranger, who had settled himself down by the fire, with his pipe in his mouth, and the coffee on the fender. "You certainly can make a good cup of coffee."

Suddenly he turned round and said quickly: "It has just struck me that you may have added poison to that coffee. I do not really mind if

you have done this, but I should much like to know. It would be quite natural for you to wish to poison me, since I am probably the only person who knows that you have murdered my son. I should not be in the least surprised or angry, so I beg of you to tell me the truth."

He put his hand on the young man's arm, almost caressingly.

"The idea never even entered my head, sir," answered the young man. "You might guess that, because I am drinking from the same coffee-pot. I beg of you not to think badly of me."

"But you have murdered my son," said the umbrella-mender. "He lies there, struck down by your hand; at least, so you tell me. And I see no reason why you should invent such a story; unless, perhaps, you 're mad. By the way, I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"My name is Bernard Dene," answered the stranger, taking his tobacco-pouch from his pockets and refilling his pipe. "At least, that is

what I choose to call myself. I thought that was a good name for an artist, but it never brought luck to me. It is hard when you have the power and the wish to work, and you cannot get anything to do. But I expect you do not know what that means ; you are not unlucky."

"Not particularly so," said the umbrella-mender, sipping his coffee. "Now I wish you would oblige me by telling me something about yourself. And I should very much like to know why you have killed my son."

Then the young man drew closer to the old man, and told him about himself. He had had no chances in life, and if there were a God of heaven and earth, as some people seemed to think, that God of heaven and earth had a strange way of taking care of those who needed help, and hope, and encouragement. No one had ever cared for him until he met a sweet woman whom he married. And she had died in giving birth to his little girl. That was six years ago. He had never known his father ; and as for his mother, it was very little she had

troubled herself about him. Nothing had ever prospered with him: neither art, nor love, nor friendship. Even his little girl did not love him; she had always seemed frightened of him; why, he could not guess. Still he had tried to make the best he could of life, until Marius Crocker came across his path. The end of it was that Marius Crocker had betrayed the woman whom Bernard Dene loved, and for whom he was trying to work, hoping that he might at last conquer failure, and win happiness and peace. The man who had robbed him of this last hope deserved to die. He had told him that he would kill him, and Marius Crocker had jeered at him. Well, he would not jeer any more now.

"That is my story, sir," he cried, excitedly. "You see, I was obliged to kill your son. Forgive me, sir; I say it with all due deference to you: but the world is better without him. But I fear I have hurt your feelings. I am very sorry."

The umbrella-mender stirred restlessly in his chair.

"No, you have not hurt my feelings," he murmured, half to himself, "for Marius was never a son to me. In fact, I never knew what a son's love meant. I have only read of such love. But his life was different from yours: he had every care, every thought bestowed on him. But I feel sure that nothing could ever have made him a good man. He had not the genius for being good, just as I have not the genius for painting. He broke his mother's heart, and she died. He broke my heart; but you see I live on. Whilst I had money, Marius robbed me. So I became poor, knowing that this was my one chance of peace. When he realised that I had no more money to give, he left me alone, and that was the only merciful thing he ever did for me. But with all this I loved him. It is a way we have, you know, of loving those who are a life's sorrow, a life's anxiety to us."

He paused a moment, and then drew nearer to the young man.

"And because I loved him, and because you

killed him, you must die," he said, slowly. "Not that I see there is any advantage in your death: you, by your death, cannot bring him back to life again, even if I wished him to come back to life again. And I do not wish this. He lies there, at least powerless to do evil, and that is a gain for the world, and for him too. But all the same, you must die, for several reasons: first of all, for your own sake; and secondly, for my wife's sake; and thirdly, for your child's sake. You probably understand the first and the third reasons; and as for the second, it is briefly this: women are revengeful. I cannot hope that my wife's soul will greet my soul in perfect love if our son Marius is unavenged. The joy of our souls' meeting will thus be marred, just because, to gratify my own earthly wish, I shall have spared you. You see plainly you must die. But I am sorry; yes, I am very sorry. You are a fine young fellow, and I could have loved you."

Bernard Dene took his pipe from his mouth, and bent forward eagerly.

"Thank you," he said; "it was good of you to say that. I shall never forget that. I suppose you would not shake hands with me, would you?"

"By all means," answered the umbrella-mender, warmly; and he held out his hand, which Bernard Dene grasped firmly. "I am pleased to have made your acquaintance. You seem to be a gallant young man, and you must not lose heart about yourself. Ah! but I forgot that you had not long to live. I suppose you will kill yourself to-night?"

"Yes; but not for an hour or so," said the artist, rising. "I should like first to show you some of my paintings, such as they are. I made a portrait of *him*. You may be interested in that. If it pleases you, I trust you will accept it as a little remembrance of him and me. What a terrible night! It is still snowing hard. I do not know how you will manage about getting home. It was not fair to bring you out. Perhaps it will be better for you to remain here. I can easily make up a bed for

you ; or you could have mine. I shall not need mine, you know."

"Thank you," said the umbrella-mender; "but I think I will go home when it leaves off snowing."

At that moment his eye detected an umbrella resting against the window. He rose from his chair by the fire and examined the umbrella.

"It wants mending," he said. "The framework is strong, but it ought to be re-covered. If you go in for usefulness, and not merely for elegance, I should recommend alpaca. I will take it home with me, and you must call for it at your own convenience. I shall make no charge. Ah! I beg your pardon. I had forgotten. You will not require it, will you?"

"Probably not," said the artist, smiling. "There is the portrait of your son. It is the best painting I have ever done. Let us take it to the bedside, and then you will see what an excellent likeness it is."

So these two men stood together by the bedside of Marius Crocker, now looking at his

features fixed in death, and now looking at the portrait, which seemed to be a living thing. There was life in those eyes, there was life in every thread of hair, there was life in every vein.

The umbrella-mender turned away with a nervous laugh.

"Put it in the dark," he said. "Put it where I cannot see it."

Bernard Dene placed it with its face towards the wall.

"That laugh was the laugh of a madman," he said, half aloud. "I thought from the first you were mad, but now I am sure of it."

The umbrella-mender laughed again quietly. He warmed his hands by the fire.

"Do you mind burning that portrait?" he asked, suddenly. "The very thought of it troubles me. I insist on its being burnt at once. It is not agreeable of you to hesitate. It cannot possibly matter to you, as you are going to die so soon. And it matters very much to me."

He darted forward and seized the picture

with both hands, and would have carried it at once to the fire ; but the artist, roused to anger, roughly prevented him, and for a moment the two men struggled desperately.

Neither the one nor the other conquered ; for suddenly something fell from the bed yonder, and the artist looked at the umbrella-mender, and the umbrella-mender looked at the artist, and they stood there together, paralysed with fear, holding the picture between them; and the candle gave a feeble flicker and went out, and the tick of the clock during that suspense seemed to have become louder and more painfully regular.

Then the artist spoke in a whisper.

"What was that?" he asked. "Perhaps he is not dead after all. We will speak to him. You call his name. Lean on my arm, for you are trembling."

"And you are trembling too," whispered the umbrella-mender. "Let me beseech you to be quite calm. I will speak to him. Marius! Marius!" he said, in an awed tone of voice.

But there was no answer. The artist put the portrait in the umbrella-mender's hands, and struck a match and lit another bit of candle, and then peered around. A book had fallen from the bed. Bernard Dene picked it up and showed it to the umbrella-mender. He smiled sorrowfully as he turned over the leaves and looked at the simple illustrations.

"I remember now," he said. "This is my little girl's book. He was fond of my little girl. That was the one good thing about him. He played with her, and read to her, and talked to her, and I do believe he was as tender as any mother with her. But even for this I hated him, for she loved him better than she loves me. I always knew there was no place for me in this world. He bought her this book. He probably cheated some one out of the money, and then came home and gave her pleasure. That was his way of doing things. By the way, will you take care of my little girl when I 'm gone? Her name is Fairy. You cannot but love her."

"I was going to propose that to you," said the umbrella-mender, kindly. "I should like to have her, and I think I have changed my mind about that portrait. I should much like to have it."

"I am glad of that," answered the artist, warmly. "I do not care about my life, but I am jealous for the life of my pictures. I leave them all to you. They will help to pay you for Fairy. The only one I do not wish you to sell is the portrait of your son. You must hang that in your umbrella-shop. Now I will go and fetch my little girl, and then you must go home. I am sure you will trust me to kill myself. I flatter myself that I have never broken my word to any one. I was born a gentleman, and I will die a gentleman. At least I can do that."

The umbrella-mender held out his hand.

"I trust you implicitly," he said. "I will call in to-morrow morning and look regretfully at you. I shall always think kindly of you, and I hope you will do the same of me. I only wish that we had met under happier circumstances.

But unfortunately we have no choice in these matters—no choice. I should tell you, though, that I think you are undoubtedly mad. I flatter myself that I am an excellent judge of character. I should not make this remark about you, but that you ventured to make it about me ; and as I am not offended, there is no reason why you should be offended. After all, you know, madness is only a relative term, like vice and virtue, and everything else. For all we know, that which we call courage here may be called cowardice in the planet Venus. And similarly, those who are called mad here may be called sane there. Now fetch your little girl, and we will leave you alone to die."

The artist closed the door quietly after him, and the umbrella-mender, finding himself alone, stood by the bed where his son lay dead, with that peaceful smile on his face.

"I do not know of what you are thinking, Marius," he whispered, as he put his hand on that cold forehead, "but, for my own part, I am glad you should smile happily. If you, who

have done so much evil, have nothing to fear in death, then we, who have done less evil, Marius, we can have nothing to fear. Farewell, my son; I do not grieve for you now. But whilst you lived, my whole life was one great grief for you. You bowed my head, you broke my heart. But that only made me love you the more. Farewell, Marius, my son."

He kissed the cold forehead, and, shivering, passed over to the fireside, and once more examined the umbrella which he was going to take home to mend. He combed his scanty brown hair with his hand, as was his wont when engaged in professional contemplation.

"Yes," he murmured, "this umbrella has a good strong framework. Marius never had a strong moral framework. I think human beings are very like umbrellas, very like umbrellas. But they do not last so well, and I do not think they ever can be repaired; they can only be patched up for a time."

He was still holding the umbrella in his hand, when Bernard Dene came into the room,

carrying a little fair-haired girl wrapped in a grey shawl. She was crying, and looked terrified.

"This is Fairy," the artist said. And then he added almost pathetically: "She always cries when she is with me. She is frightened of me; but she loved him yonder. Hush, child! you must not cry. You will wake him. He is tired, and he wants to sleep. You may kiss him, on the forehead.

"Oh, how cold!" she said, shrinking back, when her lips met the cold forehead.

"Yes, Fairy," her father said, fondling her fair hair. "But it is snowing, you know. Every one is cold when it is snowing."

"Put me down," she begged; "I don't want to be with you. Let me go to the little old gentleman."

"She never loved me," murmured the artist; "it was every one else but me."

And he turned away and wept his whole heart out, whilst the umbrella-mender was holding the child in his arms, talking to her as though he had known and loved her all her life, he who had

never before held a child in his arms, except Marius yonder.

"Will you come home with me, little one?" he asked, in a voice so gentle that Bernard Dene ceased weeping and listened to it.

"Yes," she answered, smiling at him, and her fair head rested on his shoulder.

"Then say 'good-bye' to your father," he said, "and we will go home at once."

"Good-bye, dad," she said, carelessly. It was nothing to her to part from him.

"You 'll not see me again, Fairy," he said, sadly.

"Sha'n't I?" she asked. "Do you know, dad, if he was n't so cold I should kiss him again? I think I 'd like to."

So they held her over him, and she kissed him, and put her little arms around his neck. Then they put his last gift-book in her hand, and the umbrella-mender turned to the artist:

"I am sorry to leave you," he said, kindly; "but the hour has now come, and we must go our own ways. You have a long way to go. Re-

member, I trust you implicitly. Farewell. I shall see you to-morrow ; not as you are now, it is true. I shall look upon what you were ; and believe me, young man, I shall grieve for you. Farewell, Bernard Dene. Even failure is only a relative term, you know. And that which the world calls failure may have some better name in another planet. Therefore do not lose heart about yourself."

The artist bowed his head : his right hand rested on the child's head, his left hand on the umbrella-mender's shoulder.

"You have spoken very kindly to me," he said. "If there be a God, I trust that God may bless you, and make your latter days happy and peaceful. As for me, be assured that I shall not break my word to you. I leave my child and my pictures to you. Shall I see you home? The snow lies thick on the ground, and you do not know the way very well, and it is bitterly cold. Put on my overcoat. I shall not want it, for I shall not go out again unless you would like me to see you home."

"Do not trouble to do that," said the umbrella-mender. "Fairy and I will easily find our way. And many thanks for the offer of the coat. I should be grateful for it. Do not be anxious about Fairy. I will take every care of her. And now, good-night."

The artist followed them down the creaking stairs, and opened the door for them to pass out. He closed the door hastily after them. There were a few men standing about, and some boys were snowballing each other and laughing lustily, and one of them, seeing the umbrella-mender, prepared a huge missile, and was just about to aim it at his head, when a great coarse-looking woman prevented him.

"Hold hard!" she cried, with an oath. "It 's the mad painter's little daughter. Snowball me, not her."

Fairy clung closer to the umbrella-mender.

"That 's what they always call him," she whispered, dreamily, "mad, mad,—what can it mean?"

But before he could answer her, she had

fallen into a gentle sleep ; and thus he bore her along the snow-covered streets, careful of every step he took, lest perchance he might slip and rouse her from her slumbers. Her little golden head rested against his face, and her little hands tightly clasped his neck, and he loved to feel her touch, remembering that she, and she alone, had called forth what good there was in his son's evil nature. The world might call him bad, for such he had proved himself to be to the world ; but this child said he was good, for such he had shown himself to be to her. It was something in his favour that he had won this child's love : maybe it would go all the better with him hereafter because her lips had touched his cold forehead.

So the umbrella-mender carried her to the umbrella shop. He laid her tenderly on the counter, well wrapped in the warm grey shawl. He lit the lamp, and made up the fire in the ittle inner room, and then, to the best of his bility, improvised a cosy bed, where he placed er, just as she was. Then he knelt by her

and guarded her for a while, smiling contentedly when he saw her smiling in her sleep. After an hour or so he left her, and carefully shading the lamp from her eyes, he settled down to read a few pages of Grote's *Greece*, in which he had been engaged when he was summoned away to his son's death-bed. He tried to collect his thoughts and concentrate them on the subject, which had a great interest for him ; but he found himself thinking now of the artist, now of his son, and he found his eyes wandering away from the pages of Grote's history to the spot yonder where the child was sleeping and smiling, and holding tightly in her hands Marius Crocker's last gift-book.

"What will she prove?" he said aloud. "Her father is undoubtedly mad. It is a curious sensation being with a madman. My heart stood still within me when we were struggling for that picture. Fancy him being quite willing to kill himself because he had murdered Marius? If he had not been mad,

he would have sent me after Marius, instead of choosing to go himself. Well, he is a fine young fellow, and it is a pity he should die."

Then he laughed softly.

"Of course he was mad: his eyes told me that. Still, I am glad to have made his acquaintance. I shall always think of him with pleasure. I wonder how he will get on in the next planet! I trust he will be happy and successful."

And meanwhile the artist, alone with the dead man, wrote out his will. It was briefly this:

"To Coriolanus Crocker, of 30 Stone Street, umbrella-mender and madman, I leave my little girl Fairy and all my pictures signed with my name. Any of my pictures, except the portrait of Marius Crocker, whom I have killed, may be sold by Coriolanus Crocker, Marius Crocker's father.

"BERNARD DENE.

"*24th January*, 1878."

"Some one ought to witness this," he said to himself, rising up with the pen in his hand. His eyes fell on his silent companion. "To be sure!" he cried. "A capital idea! Marius himself shall witness my last will and testament."

He took the cold hand in his own, and put the pen between the thumb and the first finger, and made it trace out the signature "*Marius Crocker, dead man.*"

He smiled, and rubbed his hands together, as though he were quite delighted with himself.

"Now I must kill myself," he said, as he dried the paper before the fire. "And I think that is about all. Fancy that madman trusting me to kill myself! No sane man would have done such a thing. I saw from the beginning that he was mad. There was no mistaking the look in his eyes."

Suddenly he became pensive.

"But the umbrella-mender spoke very kindly to me," he murmured to himself, "and he did

not once reproach me for having killed Marius. In fact he behaved like a gentleman. And he said something about failure, which struck me as being comforting. Well, I trust that his latter days may be happy and peaceful. That is what we want—peace. I have never known peace: there was always confusion and tumult in my brain. Perhaps death brings peace. I shall soon find out about that. . . ."

The people of the house heard the report of a pistol. They rushed up to the artist's room, expecting to have to break open the door. But it was not even closed against them; so they passed through without delay, and found the artist fallen on the ground. They raised his head gently.

"I killed that man yonder," he whispered. "Let that be clearly understood. You did not know the umbrella-mender, did you? He is undoubtedly——"

At that moment the artist died.

THE BIRD ON ITS JOURNEY

THE BIRD ON ITS JOURNEY.

IT was about four in the afternoon when a young girl came into the salon of the little hotel at C. in Switzerland, and drew her chair up to the fire.

"You are soaked through," said an elderly lady, who was herself trying to get roasted. "You ought to lose no time in changing your clothes."

"I have not anything to change," said the young girl, laughing. "Oh, I shall soon be dry!"

"Have you lost all your luggage?" asked the lady, sympathetically.

"No," said the young girl, "I had none to lose." And she smiled a little mischievously, as though she knew by instinct that her compan-

ion's sympathy would at once degenerate into suspicion!

"I don't mean to say that I have not a knapsack," she added, considerately. "I have walked a long distance—in fact from Z."

"And where did you leave your companions?" asked the lady, with a touch of forgiveness in her voice.

"I am without companions, just as I am without luggage," laughed the girl.

And then she opened the piano, and struck a few notes. There was something caressing in the way in which she touched the keys: whoever she was, she knew how to make sweet music; sad music, too, full of that undefinable longing, like the holding out of one's arms to one's friends in the hopeless distance.

The lady bending over the fire looked up at the little girl, and forgot that she had brought neither friends nor luggage with her. She hesitated for one moment, and then she took the childish face between her hands and kissed it.

"Thank you, dear, for your music," she said, gently.

"The piano is terribly out of tune," said the little girl suddenly, and she ran out of the room and came back carrying her knapsack.

"What are you going to do?" asked her companion.

"I am going to tune the piano," the little girl said; and she took a tuning-hammer out of her knapsack, and began her work in real earnest. She evidently knew what she was about, and pegged away at the notes as though her whole life depended on the result.

The lady by the fire was lost in amazement. Who could she be? Without luggage and without friends, and with a tuning-hammer!

Meanwhile one of the gentlemen had strolled into the salon; but hearing the sound of tuning, and being in secret possession of nerves, he fled, saying, "The tuner, by Jove!"

A few minutes afterwards, Miss Blake, whose nerves were no secret possession, hastened into

the salon, and in her usual imperious fashion demanded instant silence.

"I have just done," said the little girl. "The piano was so terribly out of tune; I could not resist the temptation."

Miss Blake, who never listened to what any one said, took it for granted that the little girl was the tuner, for whom M. le Propriétaire had promised to send; and having bestowed on her a condescending nod, passed out into the garden, where she told some of the visitors that the piano had been tuned at last, and that the tuner was a young woman of rather eccentric appearance.

"Really, it is quite abominable how women thrust themselves into every profession," she remarked, in her masculine voice. "It is so unfeminine, so unseemly."

There was nothing of the feminine about Miss Blake: her horse-cloth dress, her waistcoat and high collar, and her billy-cock hat were of the masculine genus; even her nerves could not be called feminine, since we learn from two or

three doctors (taken off their guard) that nerves are neither feminine nor masculine, but common.

"I should like to see this tuner," said one of the tennis-players, leaning against a tree.

"Here she comes," said Miss Blake, as the little girl was seen sauntering into the garden.

The men put up their eye-glasses, and saw a little lady with a childish face and soft brown hair, of strictly feminine appearance and bearing. The goat came towards her and began nibbling at her frock. She seemed to understand the manner of goats, and played with him to his heart's content. One of the tennis-players, Oswald Everard by name, strolled down to the bank where she was having her frolic.

"Good afternoon," he said, raising his cap. "I hope the goat is not worrying you. Poor little fellow! This is his last day of play. He is to be killed to-morrow for table d'hôte."

"What a shame!" she said. "Fancy to be killed, and then grumbled at!"

"That is precisely what we do here," he said,

laughing. "We grumble at everything we eat. And I own to being one of the grumpiest; though the lady in the horse-cloth dress yonder follows close upon my heels."

"She was the lady who was annoyed at me because I tuned the piano," the little girl said. "Still, it had to be done. It was plainly my duty. I seemed to have come for that purpose."

"It has been confoundedly annoying having it out of tune," he said. "I 've had to give up singing altogether. But what a strange profession you have chosen! Very unusual, is n't it?"

"Why, surely not," she answered, amused. "It seems to me that every other woman has taken to it. The wonder to me is that any one ever scores a success. Nowadays, however, no one could amass a huge fortune out of it."

"No one, indeed!" replied Oswald Everard, laughing. "What on earth made you take to it?"

"It took to me," she said, simply. "It wrapt

me round with enthusiasm. I could think of nothing else. I vowed that I would rise to the top of my profession. I worked day and night. But it means incessant toil for years if one wants to make any headway."

"Good gracious! I thought it was merely a matter of a few months," he said, smiling at the little girl.

"A few months," she repeated, scornfully. "You are speaking the language of an amateur. No: one has to work faithfully year after year; to grasp the possibilities and pass on to greater possibilities. You imagine what it must feel like to touch the notes, and know that you are keeping the listeners spellbound; that you are taking them into a fairyland of sound, where petty personality is lost in vague longing and regret."

"I confess I had not thought of it in that way," he said, humbly. "I have only regarded it as a necessary every-day evil; and to be quite honest with you, I fail to see now how it can inspire enthusiasm. I wish I could see," he

added, looking up at the engaging little figure before him.

"Never mind," she said, laughing at his distress; "I forgive you. And after all, you are not the only person who looks upon it as a necessary evil. My poor old guardian abominated it. He made many sacrifices to come and listen to me. He knew I liked to see his kind old face, and that the presence of a real friend inspired me with confidence."

"I should not have thought it was nervous work," he said.

"Try it and see," she answered. "But surely you spoke of singing. Are you not nervous when you sing?"

"Sometimes," he replied, rather stiffly. "But that is slightly different." (He was very proud of his singing, and made a great fuss about it.) "Your profession, as I remarked before, is an unavoidable nuisance. When I think what I have suffered from the gentlemen of your profession, I only wonder that I have any brains left. But I am uncourteous."

"No, no," she said. "Let me hear about your sufferings."

"Whenever I have specially wanted to be quiet," he said; and then he glanced at her childish little face, and he hesitated. "It seems so rude of me," he added. He was the soul of courtesy, although he was an amateur tenor singer.

"Please tell me," the little girl said, in her winning way.

"Well," he said, gathering himself together, "it is the one subject on which I can be eloquent. Ever since I can remember, I have been worried and tortured by those rascals. I have tried in every way to escape from them, but there is no hope for me. Yes; I believe that all the tuners in the universe are in league against me, and have marked me out for their special prey."

"*All the what?*" asked the little girl, with a jerk in her voice.

"All the tuners, of course," he replied, rather snappishly. "I know that we cannot do without them; but, good heavens! they have no tact, no

consideration, no mercy. Whenever I 've wanted to write or read quietly, that fatal knock has come at the door, and I 've known by instinct that all chance of peace was over. Whenever I 've been giving a luncheon-party, the tuner has arrived, with his abominable black bag, and his abominable card, which has to be signed at once. On one occasion I was just proposing to a girl in her father's library, when the tuner struck up in the drawing-room. I left off suddenly, and fled from the house. But there is no escape from these fiends : I believe they are swarming about in the air like so many bacteria. And how, in the name of goodness, you should deliberately choose to be one of them, and should be so enthusiastic over your work, puzzles me beyond all words. Don't say that you carry a black bag, and present cards which have to be filled up at the most inconvenient time : don't——"

He stopped suddenly, for the little girl was convulsed with laughter. She laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks ; and then she dried her eyes and laughed again.

"Excuse me," she said, "I can't help myself; it 's so funny."

"It may be funny to you," he said, laughing in spite of himself; "but it is not funny to me."

"Of course it is n't," she replied, making a desperate effort to be serious. "Well, tell me something more about these tuners."

"Not another word," he said, gallantly. "I am ashamed of myself as it is. Come to the end of the garden, and let me show you the view down into the valley."

She had conquered her fit of merriment, but her face wore a settled look of mischief, and she was evidently the possessor of some secret joke. She seemed in capital health and spirits, and had so much to say that was bright and interesting, that Oswald Everard found himself becoming reconciled to the whole race of tuners. He was amazed to learn that she had walked all the way from Z., and quite alone too.

"Oh, I don't think anything of that," she said; "I had a splendid time, and I caught four rare

butterflies. I would not have missed those for anything. As for the going about by myself, that is a second nature. Besides, I do not belong to any one. That has its advantages, and I suppose its disadvantages; but at present I have only discovered the advantages. The disadvantages will discover themselves!"

"I believe you are what the novels call an advanced young woman," he said. "Perhaps you give lectures on Woman's Suffrage or something of that sort?"

"I have very often mounted the platform," she answered. "In fact, I am never so happy as when addressing an immense audience. A most unfeminine thing to do, is n't it? What would the lady yonder in the horse-cloth dress and billy-cock hat say? Don't you think you ought to go and help her drive away the goat? She looks so frightened. She interests me deeply. I wonder whether she has written an essay on the Feminine in Woman. I should like to read it: it would do me so much good."

"You are at least a true woman," he said,

laughing, "for I see you can be spiteful. The tuning has not driven that away."

"Ah, I had forgotten about the tuning," she answered, brightly; "but now you remind me, I have been seized with a great idea."

"Won't you tell it to me?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "I keep my great ideas for myself, and work them out in secret. And this one is particularly amusing. What fun I shall have!"

"But why keep the fun to yourself?" he said. "We all want to be amused here; we all want to be stirred up: a little fun would be a charity."

"Very well, since you wish it, you shall be stirred up," she answered; "but you must give me time to work out my great idea. I do not hurry about things, not even about my professional duties. For I have a strong feeling that it is vulgar to be always amassing riches! As I have neither a husband nor a brother to support, I have chosen less wealth, and more leisure to enjoy all the loveliness of life! So you see I take my time about everything. And to-morrow

I shall catch butterflies at my leisure, and lie amongst the dear old pines, and work at my great idea."

"I shall catch butterflies," said her companion. "And I too shall lie amongst the dear old pines."

"Just as you please," she said; and at that moment the table d'hôte bell rang.

The little girl hastened to the bureau and spoke rapidly in German to the cashier.

"Ach, Fräulein!" he said. "You are not really serious?"

"Yes, I am," she said. "I don't want them to know my name. It will only worry me. Say I am the young lady who tuned the piano."

She had scarcely given these directions and mounted to her room, when Oswald Everard, who was much interested in his mysterious companion, came to the bureau and asked for the name of the little lady.

"Es ist das Fräulein welches das Piano gestimmt hat," answered the man, returning with unusual quickness to his account-book.

No one spoke to the little girl at table d'hôte, but for all that, she enjoyed her dinner, and gave her serious attention to all the courses. Being thus solidly occupied, she had not much leisure to bestow on the conversation of the other guests. Nor was it specially original: it treated of the shortcomings of the chef, the tastelessness of the soup, the toughness of the beef, and all the many failings which go to complete a mountain-hotel dinner. But suddenly, so it seemed to the little girl, this time-honoured talk passed into another phase: she heard the word music mentioned, and she became at once interested to learn what these people had to say on a subject which was dearer to her than any other.

"For my own part," said a stern-looking old man, "I have no words to describe what a gracious comfort music has been to me all my life. It is the noblest language which man may understand and speak. And I sometimes think that those who know it, or know something of it, are able at rare moments to find an answer to life's perplexing problems."

The little girl looked up from her plate. Robert Browning's words rose to her lips, but she did not give them utterance :

" God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear ;
The rest may reason, and welcome ; 't is we musicians know."

" I have lived through a long life," said another elderly man, " and have therefore had my share of trouble ; but the grief of being obliged to give up music was the grief which held me longest, or which perhaps has never left me. I still crave for the gracious pleasure of touching once more the strings of the violoncello, and hearing the dear tender voice singing and throbbing and answering even to such poor skill as mine. I still yearn to take my part in concerted music, and be one of those privileged to play Beethoven's string quartettes. But that will have to be in another incarnation, I think."

He glanced at his shrunken arm, and then, as though ashamed of this allusion to his own personal infirmity, he added hastily :

" But when the first pang of such a pain is

over, there remains the comfort of being a listener. At first one does not think it a comfort; but, as time goes on, there is no resisting its magic influence. And Lowell said rightly, 'that one of God's great charities is music.'"

"I did not know you were musical, Mr. Keith," said an English lady. "You have never before spoken of music."

"Perhaps not, madam," he answered. "One does not often speak of what one cares for most of all. But when I am in London, I rarely miss hearing our best players."

At this point others joined in, and the various merits of eminent pianists were warmly discussed.

"What a wonderful name that little English lady has made for herself!" said the Major, who was considered an authority on all subjects. "I would go anywhere to hear Miss Thyra Flowerdew. We all ought to be very proud of her. She has taken even the German musical world by storm, and they say her recitals at Paris have been brilliantly successful. I myself have heard

her at New York, Leipsic, London, Berlin, and even Chicago."

The little girl stirred uneasily in her chair.

"I don't think Miss Flowerdew has ever been to Chicago," she said.

There was a dead silence. The admirer of Miss Thyra Flowerdew looked much annoyed, and twiddled his watch-chain. He had meant to say Philadelphia, but he did not think it necessary to own to his mistake.

"What impertinence!" said one of the ladies to Miss Blake. "What can she know about it? Is she not the young person who tuned the piano?"

"Perhaps she tunes Miss Thyra Flowerdew's piano!" suggested Miss Blake in a loud whisper.

"You are right, madam," said the little girl, quietly. "I have often tuned Miss Flowerdew's piano."

There was another embarrassing silence; and then a lovely old lady, whom every one reverenced, came to the rescue.

"I think her playing is simply superb," she said. "Nothing that I ever hear satisfies me so entirely. She has all the tenderness of an angel's touch."

"Listening to her," said the Major, who had now recovered from his annoyance at being interrupted, "one becomes unconscious of her presence, for she *is the music itself*. And that is rare. It is but seldom nowadays that we are allowed to forget the personality of the player. And yet her personality is an unusual one: having once seen her, it would not be easy to forget her. I should recognise her anywhere."

As he spoke, he glanced at the little tuner, and could not help admiring her dignified composure under circumstances which might have been distressing to any one; and when she rose with the others, he followed her, and said stiffly:

"I regret that I was the indirect cause of putting you in an awkward position."

"It is really of no consequence," she said, brightly. "If you think I was impertinent, I ask your forgiveness. I did not mean to be

officious. The words were spoken before I was aware of them."

She passed into the salon, where she found a quiet corner for herself, and read some of the newspapers. No one took the slightest notice of her : not a word was spoken to her ; but when she relieved the company of her presence, her impertinence was commented on.

"I am sorry that she heard what I said," remarked Miss Blake. "But she did not seem to mind. These young women who go out into the world lose the edge of their sensitiveness and femininity. I have always observed that."

"How much they are spared then !" answered some one.

Meanwhile the little girl slept soundly. She had merry dreams, and finally woke up laughing. She hurried over her breakfast, and then stood ready to go for a butterfly-hunt. She looked thoroughly happy, and evidently had found, and was holding tightly, the key to life's enjoyment.

Oswald Everard was waiting on the balcony,

and he reminded her that he intended to go with her.

"Come along, then," she answered; "we must not lose a moment."

They caught butterflies, they picked flowers, they ran; they lingered by the wayside, they sang; they climbed, and he marvelled at her easy speed. Nothing seemed to tire her, and everything seemed to delight her: the flowers, the birds, the clouds, the grasses, and the fragrance of the pine-woods.

"Is it not good to live?" she cried. "Is it not splendid to take in the scented air? Draw in as many long breaths as you can. Isn't it good? Don't you feel now as though you were ready to move mountains? I do. What a dear old nurse Nature is! How she pets us, and gives us the best of her treasures!"

Her happiness invaded Oswald Everard's soul, and he felt like a schoolboy once more, rejoicing in a fine day and his liberty; with nothing to spoil the freshness of the air, and nothing to threaten the freedom of the moment.

"Is it not good to live?" he cried. "Yes, indeed it is, if we know how to enjoy."

They had come upon some haymakers, and the little girl hastened up to help them. There she was in the midst of them, laughing and talking to the women, and helping them to pile up the hay on the shoulders of a broad-backed man, who then conveyed his burden to a pear-shaped stack. Oswald Everard watched his companion for a moment, and then, quite forgetting his dignity as an amateur tenor singer, he too lent his aid, and did not leave off until his companion sank exhausted on the ground.

"Oh," she laughed, "what delightful work for a very short time! Come along; let us go into that brown châlet yonder and ask for some milk. I am simply parched with thirst. Thank you, but I prefer to carry my own flowers."

"What an independent little lady you are!" he said.

"It is quite necessary in our profession, I can assure you," she said, with a tone of mischief in her voice. "That reminds me that my profes-

sion is evidently not looked upon with any favour by the visitors at the hotel. I am heart-broken to think that I have not won the esteem of that lady in the billy-cock hat. What will she say to you for coming out with me? And what will she say of me for allowing you to come? I wonder whether she will say, 'How unfeminine!' I wish I could hear her!"

"I don't suppose you care," he said. "You seem to be a wild little bird."

"I don't care what a person of that description says," replied his companion.

"What on earth made you contradict the Major at dinner last night?" he asked. "I was not at the table, but some one told me of the incident; and I felt very sorry about it. What could you know of Miss Thyra Flowerdew?"

"Well, considering that she is in my profession, of course I know something about her," said the little girl.

"Confound it all!" he said, rather rudely. "Surely there is some difference between the bellows-blower and the organist."

"Absolutely none," she answered—"merely a variation of the original theme!"

As she spoke she knocked at the door of the châlet, and asked the old dame to give them some milk. They sat in the *Stube*, and the little girl looked about, and admired the spinning-wheel, and the quaint chairs, and the queer old jugs, and the pictures on the walls.

"Ah, but you shall see the other room," the old peasant woman said, and she led them into a small apartment, which was evidently intended for a study. It bore evidences of unusual taste and care, and one could see that some loving hand had been trying to make it a real sanctum of refinement. There was even a small piano. A carved book-rack was fastened to the wall.

The old dame did not speak at first; she gave her guests time to recover from the astonishment which she felt they must be experiencing; then she pointed proudly to the piano.

"I bought that for my daughters," she said, with a strange mixture of sadness and triumph. "I wanted to keep them at home with me, and

I saved and saved and got enough money to buy the piano. They had always wanted to have one, and I thought they would then stay with me. They liked music and books, and I knew they would be glad to have a room of their own where they might read and play and study ; and so I gave them this corner."

"Well, mother," asked the little girl, "and where are they this afternoon ?"

"Ah," she answered, sadly, "they did not care to stay. But it was natural enough ; and I was foolish to grieve. Besides, they come to see me."

"And then they play to you ?" asked the little girl, gently.

"They say the piano is out of tune," the old dame said. "I don't know. Perhaps you can tell."

The little girl sat down to the piano, and struck a few chords.

"Yes," she said. "It is badly out of tune. Give me the tuning-hammer. I am sorry," she added, smiling at Oswald Everard, "but I cannot neglect my duty. Don't wait for me."

"I will wait for you," he said, sullenly; and he went into the balcony and smoked his pipe, and tried to possess his soul in patience.

When she had faithfully done her work, she played a few simple melodies, such as she knew the old woman would love and understand; and she turned away when she saw that the listener's eyes were moist.

"Play once again," the old woman whispered. "I am dreaming of beautiful things."

So the little tuner touched the keys again with all the tenderness of an angel.

"Tell your daughters," she said, as she rose to say good-bye, "that the piano is now in good tune. Then they will play to you the next time they come."

"I shall always remember you, mademoiselle," the old woman said; and, almost unconsciously, she too took the childish face and kissed it.

Oswald Everard was waiting in the hay-field for his companion; and when she apologised to him for this little professional intermezzo, as

she called it, he recovered from his sulkiness and readjusted his nerves, which the noise of the tuning had somewhat disturbed.

"It was very good of you to tune the old dame's piano," he said, looking at her with renewed interest.

"Some one had to do it, of course," she answered, brightly, "and I am glad the chance fell to me. What a comfort it is to think that the next time those daughters come to see her, they will play to her, and make her very happy. Poor old dear!"

"You puzzle me greatly," he said. "I cannot for the life of me think what made you choose your calling. You must have many gifts; any one who talks with you must see that at once. And you play quite nicely too."

"I am sorry that my profession sticks in your throat," she answered. "Do be thankful that I am nothing worse than a tuner. For I might be something worse—a snob, for instance."

And, so speaking, she dashed after a butterfly, and left him to recover from her words. He

was conscious of having deserved a reproof; and when at last he overtook her, he said as much, and asked for her kind indulgence.

"I forgive you," she said, laughing. "You and I are not looking at things from the same point of view; but we have had a splendid morning together, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. And to-morrow I go on my way."

"And to-morrow you go," he repeated. "Can it not be the day after to-morrow?"

"I am a bird of passage," she said, shaking her head. "You must not seek to detain me. I have taken my rest, and off I go to other climes."

They had arrived at the hotel, and Oswald Everard saw no more of his companion until the evening, when she came down rather late for table d'hôte. She hurried over her dinner and went into the salon. She closed the door and sat down to the piano, and lingered there without touching the keys: once or twice she raised

ner hands, and then she let them rest on the notes, and half-unconsciously they began to move and make sweet music, and then they drifted into Schumann's *Abendlied*, and then the little girl played some of his *Kinderscenen*, and some of his *Fantasie Stücke*, and some of his songs.

Her touch and feeling were exquisite; and her phrasing betrayed the true musician. The strains of music reached the dining-room, and one by one the guests came creeping in, moved by the music and anxious to see the musician.

The little girl did not look up: she was in a Schumann mood that evening; and only the players of Schumann know what enthralling possession he takes of their very spirit. All the passion and pathos and wildness and longing had found an inspired interpreter; and those who listened to her were held by the magic which was her own secret, and which had won for her such honour as comes only to the few. She understood Schumann's music, and was at her best with him.

Had she, perhaps, chosen to play his music this evening because she wished to be at her best? Or was she merely being impelled by an overwhelming force within her? Perhaps it was something of both.

Was she wishing to humiliate these people who had received her so coldly? This little girl was only human; perhaps there was something of that feeling too. Who can tell? But she played as she had never played in London, or Paris, or Berlin, or New York, or Philadelphia.

At last she arrived at the Carnéval, and those who heard her, declared afterward that they had never listened to a more magnificent rendering. The tenderness was so restrained; the vigour was so refined. When the last notes of that spirited *Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins* had died away, she glanced at Oswald Everard, who was standing near her, almost dazed.

"And now my favourite piece of all," she said; and she at once began the Second Novel-

lette, the finest of the eight, but seldom played in public.

What can one say of the wild rush of the leading theme, and the pathetic longing of the Intermezzo?

> ". . . The murmuring dying notes,
> That fall as soft as snow on the sea";

and

> "The passionate strain that deeply going,
> Refines the bosom it trembles through."

What can one say of those vague aspirations and finest thoughts which possess the very dullest amongst us when such music as that which the little girl had chosen, catches us and keeps us, if only for a passing moment, but that moment of the rarest worth and loveliness in our unlovely lives?

What can one say of the highest music, except that, like death, it is the great leveller: it gathers us all to its tender keeping—and we rest.

The little girl ceased playing. There was not

a sound to be heard; the magic was still holding her listeners. When at last they had freed themselves with a sigh, they pressed forward to greet her.

"There is only one person who can play like that," cried the Major, with sudden inspiration —"she is Miss Thyra Flowerdew."

The little girl smiled.

"That is my name," she said, simply; and she slipped out of the room.

The next morning, at an early hour, the Bird of Passage took her flight onwards, but she was not destined to go off unobserved. Oswald Everard saw the little figure swinging along the road, and he overtook her.

"You little wild bird!" he said; "and so this was your great idea: to have your fun out of us all, and then play to us and make us feel, I don't know how—and then to go."

"You said the company wanted stirring up," she answered; "and I rather fancy I have stirred them up."

"And what do you suppose you have done for me?" he asked.

"I hope I have proved to you that the bellows-blower and the organist are sometimes identical," she answered.

But he shook his head.

"Little wild bird," he said, "you have given me a great idea, and I will tell you what it is: *to tame you.* So good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye," she said. "But wild birds are not so easily tamed."

Then she waved her hand over her head, and went on her way singing.

CONCERNING
THE CLOCKMAKER AND HIS WIFE

CONCERNING THE CLOCKMAKER AND HIS WIFE.

IT was late in the evening, and the rain, which had been pouring all the day long, was still pelting against the windows of the clockmaker's kitchen. The clockmaker's wife put down her knitting, threw a few sticks on the fire, unfastened the bellows from their accustomed place on the right-hand side of the hearth, and by their aid fanned life into the dying embers. She glanced at the clockmaker, who sat at the table, and was busily engaged in repairing a watch.

"Thomas," she said, "I am sure you cannot see by that light. Let me trim you another lamp."

"I have just done," he answered, gruffly, without looking up from his work.

He went on working and she went on knitting; and, except for the sound of her needles, and the purring of the black cat which sat staring into the fire, there was silence in the room, until the clockmaker dropped one of his tools, and the black cat sprang after it, and chased it gaily on the floor.

"The devil take that cat!" growled the clockmaker.

"Not yet, I hope," said the little old lady, who quietly picked up the tool, replaced it on the table, and caressed the offending cat, which, after this vigorous sally, had returned to its former task of contemplating the fire.

The little old lady leaned forward in her chair and nursed her face. She was an old-fashioned person, with sharp features and stiff grey ringlets falling over her sunken cheeks. Her eyes were piercingly bright; she had an intellectual forehead; her countenance was almost distressing in its eagerness.

At last the clockmaker rose from his chair, and came and rested in the old carved-oak settle which served the double purpose of keeping out the draught from the door, and forming a comfortable though ancient seat.

He took off his spectacles, and held them in his hand.

"Well, Volumnia," he said, "to-morrow you and I will part. Not a very pleasant prospect so far as the weather is concerned. Do you hear the rain?"

"I fear you will have a wet journey," said his wife. "Perhaps you remember that to-morrow is the anniversary of our wedding-day. On that day the rain came down in torrents just as it is pouring now. That was not a very cheerful omen for our wedding."

"No, Volumnia," the old man answered, smiling grimly; "my friends tried to persuade me not to marry you."

"Precisely," said the old lady, dryly, "and my friends tried to persuade me not to marry you."

"I wish you had listened to them, Volumnia,"

he sighed, as he leaned back in the settle. Volumnia Webster shrugged her shoulders.

"Because I did not listen to my friends, and you did not listen to your friends, Thomas," she said, "we have each of us lost thirty-five years of life. That was a pity. Life is short, and we cannot afford to fritter it away. But in all human probability we have each of us about twenty more years to live: so we must make the most of that. There is plenty of time to do a good many things in twenty years."

"The curious part," said the clockmaker, as he stroked the black cat, "the curious part, Volumnia, is that we have never thought of all this before. Now, to be honest with me, do you recollect a single day's pleasure in my company?"

Volumnia Webster mused.

"Nothing readily suggests itself to me," she said, after a pause. "Ah, yes: I *can* recall one very happy day in London, spent with books and pictures. Stay, I forgot that you did not spend that day with me. No, Thomas; to be

candid with you, I can dwell on nothing pleasurable in the past, so far as you are concerned. The fact is, there has always been such a gulf between us I came from surroundings utterly different from your world, and not only our spheres, but our actual ways of looking at things were different. Then, too, I was of gentle birth ; you know I have no wish to speak unkind words to you, Thomas, but I do not think the same adjective can qualify your birth."

"You have told me that several times before," he replied, half-sulkily. "You may have forgotten all your other duties, but you have never forgotten the duty of reminding me, either directly or indirectly, that your father was a naval captain and that my father was not a naval captain. But there, let that pass ; everybody must have some kind of hobby, and I do not grudge you yours. We were speaking of enjoyment in the past, were we not? You said you could recollect nothing pleasant, so far as I was concerned. Well, I have the advantage of you, Volumnia ; for I can recall a very happy day

spent with you in Winchester Cathedral. Do you not remember looking at the Crusaders, and noting which of them had been once, twice, or thrice to the Holy Land? I thought them fools because of their enthusiasm, and, as usual, you did not agree with me. And then we went into the town, and bought that clock yonder. That reminds me: there is something wrong with the hands; I must see to them before I go to bed to-night. Indeed, I will do so now."

"You are getting confused," said Volumnia Webster, placidly, as her husband opened the glass of the clock's face; "I have never been in Winchester."

"Why, of course," he answered, turning round, "you were not with me! That was the happiest day I ever spent. Everything in Winchester interested me, and I made friends with that old clockmaker, who wanted me to buy his business. If I had had the money, nothing would have pleased me better, for I always felt buried in this stupid village. I have never had

the chance of putting my talents to good account. Well, that is of the Past too."

He had now set in order the hands of the clock ; and, taking out his heavy gold watch, he corrected the time, and returned to the settle.

"I should tell you, Volumnia," he continued, "that I leave my affairs in excellent condition. I have wound them up just as if they were the affairs of a dead man. I owe nothing ; indeed some few shillings are owing to me for repairs which I have finished this afternoon. The clock belongs to Farmer Garrett, and the watch is the property of Mr. Fane. Be sure to return them to-morrow, and, as for the extra money, it will be useful to you at Christmas."

Volumnia Webster stirred uneasily in her chair.

"Christmas without you, will seem strange, Thomas," she said.

"Perhaps," he answered, "but one soon gets accustomed to feeling strange."

He took from his pocket his heavy old-fashioned watch, and looked at it regretfully.

"You remember, this belonged to your brother, Volumnia?" he said, sadly. "It has been my companion for many years. I suppose I must give it back to you, but I shall miss it terribly."

"No doubt you will feel strange at first," said Volumnia, "but, to quote your own words, one soon gets accustomed to feeling strange."

The old clockmaker shook his head.

"No, Volumnia," he repelid; "I shall miss that watch sadly. We can learn to do without people much more easily than without things. We become absurdly attached to our little personal possessions." His voice faltered as he spoke.

"I give in," she said, after a pause, "you may keep the watch."

"Thank you," he said, warmly; "that is generous of you. In fact, Volumnia, you have been kind to me in a great many ways, and I think I ought to tell you, that I owe you a certain amount of gratitude for all that you have done for me, and been to me, during these thirty-five

years. Sometimes I think it almost a pity that we should part ; but, on the whole, I believe we have decided for the best. And now, listen, Volumnia : I wish to impress on you that if any neighbours come in, and question you about our affairs, as neighbours will do, you may just tell them that we have not parted in anger, but that we are tired of each other. If they want more particulars, as neighbours often do want, you may tell them to go to the devil and get satisfied. They will not put further questions to you."

"I will remember your words," said his wife, putting down a violet comforter which she had just that moment finished. "Here is your comforter ; be sure and wear it in the cold and damp weather, for you cannot afford to trifle with your throat ; and if you wish to live a good twenty years longer you must take every possible precaution. For my own part, I shall be anxious to know how your health goes on. Is it desirable that we should exchange letters ?"

"I think that is hardly necessary," he said,

looking approvingly at the comforter. "After to-morrow, we practically cease to live for each other: so that it cannot really matter to you what becomes of me, and it cannot matter to me what becomes of you."

She drew her chair a little nearer to him, and looked at him almost pleadingly; she looked at the face, which had once shone with kindness for her; at the forehead, which her hand had so often soothed in hours of sickness; at his hair, grey in some places, and white in others; and she remembered how she had once tried to count those many curls, and had left off in despair. They were still there, those same curls, but grown old and grey. She thought of the young workman of thirty-five years ago, whose love and courage in an hour of trouble had won her heart, and when she spoke again there were very gentle accents in her voice.

"There have been times, Thomas," she whispered, as she put her hand on his arm—"there have been times when I have loved you very dearly. I want you to know this, and to remem-

ber this when you are far away ; for it is something to be loved tenderly, if only for a short time."

A tear fell from her bright eye on to his hand. He looked up, and seeing that her eyes were full of tears, he pressed her hand and bade her be comforted. But even as he spoke there was a strange tremor in his voice, and a troubled expression on his own face. Thus they sat together in silence.

Then she spoke.

" There are some few treasures, which we must divide to-night, Thomas. You were asking me the other day for the miniature of your grandfather. I have got it quite safe, together with the old picture of my mother. All our little relics are in that box. We shall see better if we look at them by the lamplight ; and when we have decided which are yours and which are mine, I will set the supper-table, and fry you some bacon and sausages."

Sitting side by side at the table, they took out the treasures one by one ; and old memories

were called forth at the sight of each cherished object: glad memories and sad memories curiously intermingled. There was a chain belonging to the naval captain's father, and a picture of the naval captain himself, at which Volumnia Webster gazed proudly, and at which the clockmaker stared resignedly, and there were a few curious rings, some of which were identified by the clockmaker, and others by his wife.

"See here, Volumnia," he said; "this is my mother's hair in this quaint locket. I never knew my mother, but I remember being told that they cut off a lock of her hair, as she lay dead, and they placed it in my tiny hands. I am glad to see that again."

Then they came upon a miniature of Volumnia Webster, when she was a child of five years, and the clockmaker looked at it a long time, now admiring the eager little face, and now examining with genuine approval the delicate workmanship of the gold setting.

"That is a beautiful piece of work," he said,

enthusiastically. "Any goldsmith might be proud of that."

"You always wished to sell it," she said, sharply. "You have so little sentiment in you."

"So you have told me several times," he replied, without any sign of annoyance.

"But this is the gem of all, Thomas," she said, as she handed him the miniature of a lady. "People said I was like my mother, but that was a libel on my mother's face. When I was young, though, I daresay my eyes were nearly as bright as hers. They are not bright now."

The old man looked up at Volumnia.

"No, they are not bright now," he said, critically.

He laid the picture aside, without any further remark; but he must needs have noticed that self-same pleading expression of countenance and that half-puzzled look, as though something in life had troubled the little lady, and all her ingenuity could not avail to set her mind at rest.

"This is old Peter Goodwin," said Volumnia Webster, "he was my mother's grandfather. I

always think his quaint green coat, and his brown fiddle, and his grey wig go well together. I am very proud of Peter Goodwin."

"You were always proud of your ancestors," growled the clockmaker. "For my own part, I am quite thankful I never had any. But there, I do not grudge them to you. As I said before, every one must have a hobby, and ancestors are not expensive, all things considered."

As she spoke, she took from off the table the miniature of a young boy, and slipped it into her lap, thinking that she had been unobserved.

"What are you hiding from me?" he asked. "I do not want to rob you of your family treasures, and it is not kind of you to mistrust me."

"It never even entered my head, Thomas," she said, eagerly, "and I only wished to spare you pain. If you must see, look!"

And she put the picture gently in his hands, and bent over him without speaking a word.

"We had not many reasons to be proud of our descendant, Volumnia," he said, bitterly. "He promised well in the picture, did he not? But

he did not make a very great thing of life. He had fine notions, derived from your ancestors, Volumnia. But it was not a very aristocratic ending to die in a drunken brawl. Here, take your picture. Your love for that boy was so great that you shut me out in the cold. All your thoughts were for him."

"Ah, you were always so hard," said the little old lady, passionately.

"Well, leave that matter alone now," rejoined the clockmaker, banging on the table with his fist.

All at once, some one knocked softly at the shop-door, and Volumnia said:

"I think I heard a knock at the shop-door."

"Nonsense," returned her husband. "Your ears are too sharp."

"And I have always thought yours were too dull, Thomas," the little lady replied. "Well, as you do not stir, I will go to the shop-door."

When she opened it, she found a man sitting on the doorstep. "Did you knock?" she asked, as he rose and stood before her.

"Yes," he answered; "I took that liberty.

Yours was the only light I saw in the village. I have been walking so many miles, and it is such a fearful night. I rested on your doorstep, and I could not resist the temptation of knocking."

She beckoned him into the shop.

"You are drenched with rain," she said, kindly. "Come into the kitchen, and you shall warm yourself, and be made welcome."

As he leaned against the counter, the rain trickled down his face, and down his torn coat, and from off his fair moustache. He was probably a strolling player, for he carried under his arm a fiddle and a bow wrapped in a green bag, and this was the only part of him which was not drenched with rain. He was tall, and of slight build; a man of about forty years. His face was that of a sufferer; but there was some kind of humour lingering about his mouth, and about his whole bearing there was a certain style of which poverty had not been able to rob him.

The little old lady eyed him curiously, though kindly.

"You are in a sorry plight, stranger," she said,

as she took his fiddle and laid it gently on the counter. "Ah, do not be afraid! this is not the first time that I have handled a fiddle. I am very glad that you called here for shelter. We would not wish to turn any one away on such a night as this."

"I looked in at your window," he said, half-dreamily. "I saw you bending over something; and just for the moment I almost felt as if I were coming to some one I knew. That made it easy for me to knock."

She led the way into the kitchen, and, turning to her husband, she said:

"Thomas, here is a stranger who seeks our hospitality."

"You are welcome," said the clockmaker, who came towards the stranger. "You are welcome, whoever you are. But what the devil are you doing out on such a night as this?"

"Some people have not any home," replied the fiddler, smiling. "I happen to be one of those unlucky individuals."

The clockmaker laughed,

"Rest in the settle yonder, and warm yourself," he said, "and my wife will prepare our supper. For my part, I am hungry, and, you will excuse me being personal, but you look starving."

"That 's just what I am," replied the fiddler, sinking back into the settle. "But, upon my word, we homeless, supperless creatures become accustomed to our state. We even learn to be merry over our misfortunes. Now, I ask you to look at my coat. Is there not humour in it?"

"There are a good many holes in it," said Volumnia Webster, laughing. "And it is as damp as it can be. Take it off and let me dry it."

"It is not much of a coat," said the stranger, brightly. "Now you would not believe it—would you—but I was a dandy once! I used to pride myself on being well-dressed; and my shirt-fronts were something to behold and wonder at! My boots were of the newest fashion, and the cut of my coat was absolutely faultless. However, that is all of the past."

"Precisely," remarked the clockmaker, who

had put on his spectacles to examine the newcomer.

Then he added :

"Have you come a long way to-night?"

"Yes," replied the stranger, frankly, "and I have completely lost my bearings. Not that it particularly matters where I do go, for times are bad everywhere for us strolling fiddlers. People like to listen, but they do not like to pay! Well, I can partly sympathise : I myself never cared about paying for anything? It is a habit some people have."

"By the way," said Volumnia Webster, as she cut up the bacon and put it into the frying-pan, "I left your fiddle lying on the counter ; it must be damp. Perhaps you will fetch it, Thomas ; and I will give it a good toasting : not to scorch it, but just to prevent all chances of rheumatism. That is what my father, the naval captain, used to do."

"Confound the naval captain!" growled the clockmaker half to himself, as he rose to fetch the fiddle,

"My father, the naval captain," continued the little old lady, "was fond of music, and he played a little on the fiddle yonder, that dirty old thing hanging against the wall. I shall show it to you later on."

"I should like to play on it," said the stranger, eagerly.

"And so you shall," she answered, kindly. "Thank you, Thomas; give the stranger's fiddle to me."

She took it from its bag, and warmed it at a discreet distance from the fire; she turned it over, and examined it, smiling half-mournfully, as though sad memories were forcing themselves upon her mind.

"It is quite a common instrument," said the stranger, who had been watching her with interest; "but I used to have a beautiful one in the days when I was prosperous. That was a good long time ago now. I did not then think that I should become a strolling player, making music for children and maidens to dance to and men to drink to. I had ambitions then."

"And have you no ambitions now?" asked Volumnia Webster, taking down the toasting-fork from the right-hand side of the fireplace.

"Yes," he laughed, jumping up from the settle, "my ambition is to help you to toast those slices of bread. I am a famous toaster."

She put the fork into his hand, resigning to him without hesitation the office of toaster. There was something genial about his manner which communicated itself even to the clockmaker and his wife, and found response in them. It was impossible not to feel drawn towards him, for he had that in him which claimed and secured a sympathetic welcome. The little old lady saw that it gave him pleasure to help her, so she asked him to place the chairs to the supper-table, and fetch the dish from off the dresser.

"You cannot think what a comfort it is to be in this cheerful kitchen," he said, as he helped to put the bacon into the dish. "Only those who have been out into the darkness of the night, can appreciate the warmth and glow of a red

fire, and the kindness of those who welcome wanderers to that red fire. It is ever so long since I have been into a home. I had almost forgotten what a fireside looked like; and it is quite a luxury to be treated as one still having some hold on humanity. That alone is almost as good as the supper which you are preparing. I do not say that it precisely drives away hunger, but it does drive away the blues."

In a few minutes the three were seated at the table; the guest ate heartily of the bacon and sausages, and made short work of the toast and Dutch cheese, and did not spare the home-made jam, which he declared was a relish not frequently finding its way into his life.

"That pot of jam is no safer with me than it would be with a schoolboy," he said, turning to his hostess, who was smiling to see her guest so happy. The clockmaker, too, was amused; he kept the stranger's coffee-cup well filled, and seemed altogether in an excellent humour.

"That puts warmth into a man," the fiddler said, leaning back contentedly in his chair. "I

feel alive again. One does not have a supper like this every day, I can tell you. The strolling player must take what he can get, and sometimes he cannot get anything at all! Then he must play his tune to himself, and take that for food and drink; he must live on that, or starve on that: and what do you think, sir?—the sooner he starves to death the better?"

"It all depends upon the nature of the person. The world might be the poorer or the richer for his death," remarked the clockmaker, as he poured the steaming coffee into his saucer and blew on it. "But so far as their own wishes are concerned, most people cling to life. For my own part although I am an oldish man, I wish to live as long as I can hold together: and it is not because I am particularly happy. Volumnia, my wife, gives me twenty years of life, if I am careful. What do you think of her judgment?"

The stranger laughed.

"I should not say you were very strong," he answered; "but you probably have more life in

your little finger than I have in my whole body. And then, of course, you have more chances of taking care of yourself than I have. I am not in a position to consult the weather, for instance; and you are."

"Thomas has a delicate throat," interposed Volumnia Webster; "otherwise I have no fears for him. He is particularly anxious to live a long time; for to-morrow he and I part. And such few years as may remain to us, we shall spend as each of us thinks fit."

"What an odd idea!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Not at all," remarked the clockmaker, gruffly; "the only odd part of it is, that we did not come to the determination before, but have waited thirty-five years before making up our minds."

"And I suppose you think that if you wait much longer it will be too late," suggested the stranger. "The time does slip away so stealthily, does it not?"

He suddenly rose from the table.

"If this is the case," he said, "I have al-

ready intruded too long. You cannot want a stranger here on your last evening."

"On the contrary," replied the clockmaker, lighting his pipe, "we are very glad to have you: we were not particularly happy before you arrived. Your coming here has been a pleasure. Do not hurry away; but light your pipe and draw nearer to the fire, and tell us something about yourself."

"There are two serious obstacles to your first invitation," said the fiddler: "I have no pipe and no tobacco."

"Here are both," replied the little old lady.

"And as for your third invitation," continued the stranger, smiling his thanks to the clockmaker's wife, "I doubt whether you would be particularly pleased with my history. It is not that of a hero. Indeed I am a most unheroic person. Why, people said I killed my mother; but I myself have never believed in the theory of broken hearts. Does grief kill?"

"No," replied the clockmaker, gruffly, "it does not kill."

"Yes," replied Volumnia Webster. "It brings death to the soul. I know that well, for my own heart has been dead these many years. Our son struck the blow. I wonder whether he spoke as lightly as you speak."

The clockmaker frowned, and made a gesture of impatience.

"Do let the past alone to-night, Volumnia," he said, sternly. "On the morrow, when I leave you, you may do as you please about mourning over a dead rogue. But now it would be more useful if you cleared away the supper things."

The little old lady's bright eyes flashed indignantly and her slight frame trembled with well-controlled anger; but she gave no answer, and merely busied herself with carrying out the clockmaker's suggestion, whilst the fiddler rested in the settle, smoking his pipe. But when the clockmaker took up some watches which he had been repairing, and left the kitchen, the fiddler rose to help her.

"That was rather rough on you," he said, kindly, "and it was entirely my fault. And I

believe you are suffering. My mother used to suffer like that when she pleaded for me with my father, and I used to laugh. But that was long ago. I do not laugh now."

"He never understood the boy." Volumnia Webster burst out passionately. "The boy took after my family: he was of a highly wrought temperament and of an artistic disposition, and his father, who, as you see, came from a lower sphere, could not appreciate a nature so unlike his own. He told the lad time after time that he was a rogue and would go straight to the dogs. Never a day passed but that cruel words were spoken between them. He was capable of much good; he had generous instincts. He meant well, but he was easily led away. There was one man of all men who dragged him down. I would sacrifice all the remaining years of my life if I could stand face to face with that man. It would be too merciful to kill him; but I could curse him living, curse him dying, and curse him dead. His name is in my heart; I treasure it there for very hatred."

She put her hands over her face. The stranger seemed lost in thought. His own thin-drawn face wore a troubled expression. He held his pipe listlessly in his hand. He shivered.

When at last she looked up, he had regained his composure.

"You would not wonder at my words," she said, sadly, "if you understood how mothers love their sons. But you sons cannot understand: you laugh. And I daresay my boy laughed too. Ah, well, he was a handsome lad, the real gentleman in manner and appearance. If he had lived, he would have become the very image of my father, the naval captain. That used to irritate my husband, for he could not bear to think that I had belonged to a sphere utterly different from his own. And yet such was the case. In the old days when I lived in my father's house, I was surrounded by gentlefolk, people of culture and refinement and talent. That all seems to me a dream now, and I have to look at the fiddle yonder to remember

that these things have been. But I weary you. What is all this to you?"

"It is my pleasure to hear you," the fiddler said, eagerly. "It is so long since any one has thought it worth while to talk to me. As I told you before, it is a perfect luxury to be treated like a human being. You were talking about spheres: well, I have fallen out of my original one—or, to be rather more accurate, I was kicked out! I sinned against the world, and the world has had its revenge in never giving me the chance of beginning all over again. At first I thought it was deucèd hard. Now I have learnt to shrug my shoulders, and laugh."

"Do you always laugh?" asked Volumnia Webster, touching him on the arm.

He paused.

"No," he answered, "there are times when I do not laugh. There are times, too, when I fancy that if, somewhere or other, there could be spared to me just a little of love and sympathy, out of the mass of love and sympathy throbbing in the world's heart, I should yet try

to begin all over again. There is nothing more awful than loneliness of life and soul; nothing more deadening than to feel that no one cares whether you fare ill or well, whether you die by the wayside, or whether you live to reach the next village. By Heaven! When you and your husband talk of parting on the morrow, you do not know what you say. Forgive me if I have said too much. I have no right to act the preacher to any one; but there is irony in the whole situation; a home, a red fire, and every appearance of comfort—and no happiness!"

"To make happiness," said Volumnia Webster, half to herself, "sympathy is necessary, and I have wanted sympathy all my life long. I have not been a happy woman: the months, the years, going by and bringing joy to some people, never brought joy to me. Well, well; the fire is burning low, stranger: oblige me by piling on the logs Thomas likes to see a cheerful fire. I must just go and fetch his overcoat, which wants mending, and then, perhaps, you will give us a little music on your fiddle."

"Certainly," said the stranger, as he put on the logs.

The black cat sitting on the hearth watched him with eager green eyes, and probably coming to the conclusion that he was a friend of the family, showed approval of his presence by an outburst of purring. The stranger stroked his sleek coat, and then gently rolled him over and played with him.

"You will have a bad time shortly," he said to the cat, "for I am going to fiddle. Perhaps, though, I shall charm you, after the fashion of the celebrated Orpheus, of whom you may, perchance, have heard."

At that moment the clockmaker came into the kitchen.

"I have done all my work," he said, cheerily, "and I leave everything in excellent order, so that to-morrow I shall start my new life with an easy conscience. My wife tells me you will give us a tune. I dearly love a tune, though she declares I am not fond of music. It is wonderful how a wife settles a thing of that sort. By the

way, stranger, I expect you have been hearing all about the naval captain! I have never been able to get free of that man, though he died many years ago! Woe unto the man whose wife has relations in the navy!"

"Or the army!" laughed the fiddler, taking his fiddle out of the green bag. "You should be grateful for small mercies. The navy may irritate a man's throat, but the army generally chokes him!"

"You are quite a puzzle to me," said the clockmaker, watching his guest with obvious interest. "You have the bearing and the speech of what people call a gentleman, and yet you are a strolling fiddler, homeless and, possibly, penniless."

"Excuse me, sir," interposed the stranger, with a smile; "I am the happy possessor of exactly fourpence halfpenny. Lest you doubt me, here they are."

"I own that I am curious about you," resumed the clockmaker.

"I will satisfy your curiosity," said the

stranger, good-naturedly, nodding to the little old lady who had brought her work, and was now sitting in the settle near her husband.

He stood before them, thrumming the strings of his fiddle.

"I can't think why the deuce you are going to part to-morrow," he said. "When you have heard my edifying story, you will say I am *bad.* But when I look at you both, I believe you are *mad.* Well, that is neither here nor there. With regard to myself, I have made a hash of my life. I chose my own path, and so I can blame no one except myself. When I was doing penal servitude for forgery my mother died, they said of a broken heart. We have already discussed that matter. When I came out again, I thought I would try to raise myself, just for the sake of her memory. It was rather late to think of that, was n't it ? I looked about for a livelihood, and, of course, I looked in vain. Then I remembered my fiddle ; for in the days gone by I had been considered a brilliant player. I tried to get pupils, but the story of my life spread about, and

my pupils left me. I played for a few weeks in a theatre orchestra, and there, too, my history became known, and I was obliged to go. I played with a harpist in the streets of London. One day he called me a cursèd convict, and refused to work with me. So now, turned off by every one, I play alone. May I still stay with you, or must I go? Most people tell me to go. It is not possible to hurt my feelings now; so I beg of you to be frank, and to decide just as your fancy dictates."

Neither of them answered. Volumnia and Thomas Webster stared into the fire as though they were seeing sad pictures too. There were tears in the little old lady's eyes, and the clock-maker looked distressed.

"Then I will go," said the fiddler, just a little sadly. He had left off thrumming the strings of his fiddle.

"No," said the old man, kindly, "still stay with us, you are our guest; we made you welcome, and you are still welcome. I only paused because your words made me think of my son,

who was killed in a drunken brawl fifteen years ago. If he had lived, would his life have been like yours, I wonder? We must give you a helping hand, stranger, for his sake. What do you say, Volumnia?"

"That would be my wish," said Volumnia Webster, earnestly.

The fiddler bent down and reverently kissed her hand.

"I have not heard such kind words for years," he said. "I feel a different man for them. They will make everything easier for me. And now for some music," he added, cheerily. "'Fit audience let me have, though few.' I am nothing of a musician now, you know. The music generally required at country inns does not reach a very high standard: it is not precisely classical. So do not be critical. I think I shall play you a Maypole dance."

Perhaps he was nothing of a player, but he knew how to make his fiddle speak to the old couple resting in the settle. He had forgotten them. He was standing on the village-green

fiddling for the Maypole dancers. Perhaps he heard the village-folk cry "Faster, faster, fiddler!" for he perpetually increased his speed, and did not seem to tire. But now these merry notes died away, giving place to a gentle melody, such as would linger in the listener's memory. The fiddle sang, and sobbed and sobbed again.

The clockmaker started as though he were pierced.

"Volumnia," he whispered, uneasily, "where have we heard that music? Ah! I know. I have heard it these many years, and sometimes, when I have refused to listen, I have heard it all the same. Why, it was the little piece our boy wrote for my birthday greeting. You have it safe, Volumnia? Tell me, Volumnia, am I dreaming?"

"No, dear, you are not dreaming," she answered. "That is the very music our boy wrote—you remember how proud we were!—we had such hopes for him, had n't we? He was so talented in every way. Poor Ralph!"

"How all the Past returns, Volumnia," he whispered, "until everything has become the Past!"

His head rested on her shoulder, and her hand fondled those grey curls, fondled so often in the days gone by.

All unconsciously the stranger had put them under a spell, the spell of the Past. They had forgotten him and his personality: they only heard the music.

The stranger ceased playing, and, looking up, saw how the clockmaker rested like a tired child, and how his wife was fondling those grey curls. He saw that they had both forgotten him.

"And naturally too," he said to himself, "for I have no claim on their remembrance. I have intruded on them long enough as it is, and now I must go out into the darkness of the night and again take up my loneliness."

He glanced round the cosy kitchen, at the red fire, at the quaint clock, at the copper warming-pan, at the dresser stocked with old china. Everything spoke to him of a home.

He was glad to have seen one again: the remembrance would be pleasant to him. Just as he was putting his fiddle into the green bag, the string broke with a loud clang, and Volumnia Webster woke from her reverie.

"Ah! you there!" she said. "Tell me how you knew that music; why did you choose that to play to us? I must know why you chose that."

He wondered at her eagerness to know.

"I seem to be telling you all my secrets to-night," he said, smiling sadly. "If confession is good for the soul, then my soul has gained something to-night. You spoke of that man who had dragged your son down. Your words sank deep into my heart, for they reminded me of what I had done in a similar way to a young fellow as full of promise as your son might have been. And I suppose I was thinking of *him* when I played that melody, for he wrote it, and I was the first to play it to him. I always thought it was a beautiful melody.

The clockmaker started up, and put his hand roughly on the stranger's arm.

"You knew him, then?" he asked, excitedly.

"Knew him?" laughed the fiddler. "Why, we were inseparable! He was my shadow. I could do anything with him—twist him round my finger—twirl him just as I pleased. He was rare good company, too—could sing a rattling song with any one; full of wit and fun. Heavens! how he made us fellows laugh! Why, he was the wildest of——"

The fiddler stopped suddenly: the little old lady was leaning over the back of a chair glaring at him, just like a tigress preparing to spring; the clockmaker was standing a few steps off, his arms tightly folded together, and his face working like the face of a man who is trying to make up his mind about something or other, trying to puzzle out some mystery.

"What is the matter with you both?" the fiddler asked, nervously. "Have I done anything wrong? Have I said anything to hurt your feelings?"

A wild cry broke from the little old lady's lips. She rushed to the cupboard in the recess, pulled

out some papers and threw them on the table. She turned them over with trembling hands, and at last found the packet she required. She tore it open, and took out the faded photograph of a young man. She held it up for the fiddler to see.

"Was that anything like your friend whom you dragged down to hell?" she hissed out.

The stranger started back as though he had been struck. His face was deadly pale.

"My God!" he cried. "That *was* the very man—Ralph Webster!"

The photograph dropped from her hand.

"Then at last," she said, slowly, "we stand face to face with our son's worst enemy. It was worth while living to see him like this: an outcast from every home!"

The stranger bowed his head. He tried to speak, but the words would not come.

"Go!" said the clockmaker, touching him roughly on the shoulder, and pointing to the door. "This is no resting-place for you."

The stranger took up fiddle and bow and

green bag, and crept to the door. The rain was still pelting against the windows, and the wind was still howling its dismal story. He paused just by the door, hoping against all hope that the little old lady would relent, and say one word of kind dismissal. If ever a human face was eloquent with pleading, his face was eloquent at that last moment.

"What are you waiting for?" she asked, sternly. "Go before my tongue is loosened."

He swung open the door, went into the shop, and unlocked the shop-door, which banged mournfully after him as he passed out into the darkness of the wild night.

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When he had gone, Volumnia Webster's composure broke down, and she sank into the settle and wept bitterly. The clockmaker bent over her, and comforted her, taking the little tear-stained face in his hands and kissing it.

"Volumnia," he whispered, "we have been drawn very near to each other to-night."

And she smiled to hear his words. She watched

him pick up the photograph, and put it back into the cupboard ; and she watched him fix his pipe on the rack which hung just over the bellows, and she saw him throw his favourite tools into their accustomed drawer. The clock struck twelve.

"You have a long journey to go on the morrow, Thomas," she said, "and you ought to be getting to rest. I must stay up a little longer to finish your overcoat."

"Never mind that," he answered, as he took the coat from her hands, "I am not going on a journey either to-morrow or any other day. I shall stay here with you, Volumnia, and live my twenty years here. The fiddler was right in saying that we were mad. May I stop, Volumnia? I could not bear to part from you now."

And she bade him stay always, promising him half-humorously that the naval captain should not worry him more than was absolutely necessary. And she spoke of the fiddler and his loneliness ; she said she could never forget that pleading look on his face as he stood by the

door waiting for one kind word ; she realised now that all his future hung at that moment in the balance ; she regretted his hasty dismissal ; she recalled the words he had spoken about the value of affection, and how he should have wished to begin all over again, if a little human sympathy could have been granted to him ; she forgot that he was a man whose name she had been cherishing in her memory for very hatred : she only remembered that he was a wretched wanderer, whom she had sent out into the darkness of the night. All the pity that was in the depths of her heart, rose up.

"Let us call him back, Thomas," she said, eagerly. "Let us give him the helping hand we promised him before we knew who he was."

So they opened the shop-door, and they shouted his name—

"Mark Weston—Mark Weston, come back to us ! We shall welcome you as we welcomed you before. We have only forgiveness and kindness for you. Come back, Mark Weston !"

But there was no answer.

"We want to help you, Mark Weston," the little old lady cried. "Come to us."

The wind and the rain gave reply; the fiddler gave none.

"No one could hear in such a storm," said the clockmaker. "It is of no use."

They shut the shop-door reluctantly and returned to the kitchen, and trimmed the lamp and put it in the window, and they sat talking over the fire: talking about their young days and about Ralph and the fiddler.

"When the fiddler sees the light, he will come back," they said to each other.

They waited until the day broke, and the storm was hushed in sleep, and the fire died out.

But the fiddler did not come back.

SORROW AND JOY

AN ALLEGORY

SORROW AND JOY.

COUNTLESS years ago, two sisters were born into the world, twin sisters. Their names were Sorrow and Joy. Those who looked upon them could hardly distinguish the one from the other, and indeed those who knew them best sometimes called Sorrow by Joy's name, and Joy by Sorrow's name. They grew up loving each other with tender affection. They were inseparable; by day they ran together over the daisied fields, through the daffodil woods, near the sweet brooklet, along the hedge-grown lanes, now stopping to pick some tiny fern or delicate blue flower. By night they slept together, hand clasped in hand, Sorrow's fair head resting against Joy's fair head.

They answered to each other's name, and when

people asked for Sorrow, Joy would say: "Will I not do as well? I 'm Joy, you know, but it 's all the same." And when people wished to see Joy, Sorrow would reply: "I 'm Sorrow, but it 's quite the same thing as seeing Joy; for Joy and I are twins, and there is no difference between us."

And yet there was a difference between them: a difference of soul, which only the mind's eye and the flowers could detect.

When Joy plucked the flowers, they smiled and lived, but when Sorrow touched them, they *withered* in her hand.

"Never mind!" laughed Joy; "there are more yet in the woods and meadows, and when the next spring comes, there will be still more."

A white-haired old man, living near them, told the story of how he took one of them by the hand, thinking he had chosen Joy, and lo! she had the soul of Sorrow, although she seemed to have the face and form of Joy. And her soul had entered into his soul, and made him sad for evermore.

But a young wife, whose life was troubled, told the story of how she had deliberately sought out Sorrow for a companion, and lo! she proved to be Joy's own self. And the soul of Joy entered into the young wife's soul, and made her glad for evermore.

Every one wanted Joy, and no one wanted Sorrow. As time went on and brought knowledge with it, Sorrow began to understand this, and her eyes became tearful and her heart heavy within her. She wondered to see Joy smiling and laughing.

"Ah, sister," she said one day, "you may well smile and laugh, for the world loves you, and wherever you go, you are a welcome guest. But as for myself, no one cares for me; indeed, when people know that I am Sorrow, they turn aside from me, and they close their doors against me. That is my portion in life."

"Nay," answered the other, as she kissed Sorrow tenderly, "but you have forgotten about that woman with whom you stayed for many weeks. When you left her, she died. People

said she died because Sorrow forsook her. Therefore she must have loved Sorrow."

But Sorrow shook her head.

"Nay, nay," she murmured, "no one loves Sorrow. I know that well. People learn to bear with Sorrow. That is all."

The years passed by. And Sorrow and Joy were still strangely alike, and at times they were still mistaken, the one for the other, as in the days of their childhood, when they danced over the daisied fields, or roamed through the daffodil woods, or knelt together by the clear stream, throwing in tiny leaves and watching them borne away by the current, borne away to the distant sea, where the streams meet and greet.

Only now Sorrow and Joy were not always together. Each had her work to do, each had her own life to live ; each went her own way, through the peaceful villages, through the densely crowded cities. Each of them visited cottages, each of them visited palaces. Joy passed through factories, but Sorrow *lingered*

there. Sorrow dwelt with the pinched and poverty-stricken inmates of the alleys and courts, in great cities. Joy never went there. Joy played with the children on the village green; she danced with them round the May-pole, she sang with them their merry songs. There was music in her laughter, and there was sunshine in her presence, and that was what the world wanted—sunshine, always more sunshine. Therefore the world loved Joy, and welcomed her, and would not let her hasten away.

Sometimes Sorrow and Joy met at the same place; sometimes Sorrow entered at the moment when Joy was taking her leave. Once Joy, meeting her twin sister at the door of the house, fell on her knees and entreated Sorrow not to visit that house.

"Dear sister," she pleaded, "I entreat you not to put your foot upon that threshold. The people of this home are all dear to me; I left them with smiles on their faces. The son, the hope and pride of the home, has come back to them from distant lands. He is ill, but there is every chance

that he may live and become strong. Sorrow, will you grant my request?"

And because Sorrow loved Joy, Sorrow did not enter that house; but she and Joy passed down the street together, hand in hand, as in the old days, whilst the people of the house which Sorrow had not visited, little knew how near to them Joy's twin sister had come. Just a few steps across their threshold, and she would have been amongst them, an unwelcome guest.

They did not often meet like this, but they often went to the same houses at different times, and Sorrow learnt how Joy had been welcomed, and Joy learnt how Sorrow had been coldly received. Then Joy would plead for Sorrow: "When Sorrow comes, be brave and faithful," she would say. "If you are brave and faithful you will find that you will be able to bear with Sorrow's presence. She brings with her something which I do not bring: she brings knowledge, to understand deep mysteries, the wearisome problems of existence; she brings courage, to make the best of life and life's oppor-

tunities. Those whom Sorrow has visited, can best understand the meaning of Joy."

But they would not believe Joy's words; they thought that she spoke out of the fulness of her affection for her twin sister.

One day Sorrow met Joy outside a great city.

"I have been searching for you far and wide," she said, as she took Joy's hand and put it to her lips. "I want you to go to the places where I have been. I want you to visit the factories where young girls toil year after year, without much hope, without much comfort; I want you to go to the close courts, where poverty and crime lurk. I want you to smile on those poor sisters for whom the world has no pity and no love. I want you to give pleasure to those who have had no pleasure for all these long years. Take some of the young children into the country: show them the beauties of Nature. Let them wander through the daffodil woods which you and I loved. Let them pluck the yellow flowers. They will feel all the better and all the happier for plucking those yellow flowers. Let them gather

mosses—the greenest you can find. Teach them the songs of the birds. They will carry that music in their hearts, and it will be a pure joy to them."

"I will do all this," said Joy, eagerly, "but you must come too, dear Sorrow. You know the country even better than I know it. Nay, you must come too."

"Not so," answered Sorrow, smiling, "it is better that I should not go with you. And listen, Joy, there is a poet who for many years now has been writing true words and beautiful thoughts. You have never visited him. Go to him, and tell him you have come instead of Sorrow, and that you bring with you success and appreciation. Tell him I sent you. Say farewell to him for me."

"And where are you going?" asked Joy, anxiously. "You look tired, dear Sorrow."

"I am going to wander about," answered Sorrow. "The world has had too much of me. I will take shelter with no one. I will watch from afar, whilst you work and teach."

"I teach!" said Joy, smiling wonderingly.

"Yes," whispered Sorrow, "you shall be a great teacher and a great reformer. The sunshine of your presence, the sweet music of your voice, the tender smile on your fair face shall be *powers* in the land. You shall do good and lasting work. Blessèd now, you shall be tenfold more blessed."

"And you, Sorrow?" asked Joy.

But Sorrow had disappeared. She left the lights of the great city behind her. She wandered about homeless. She hated her own life, because she brought trouble to those to whom she would fain have brought pleasure. She felt that she was leading a cruel and a useless life, and the sooner she died, the better for the world.

As she thus mused a voice said to her, "Who art thou?"

And she answered, as though to herself, "I am Sorrow's self."

"Welcome, thrice welcome!" replied the voice, "I have yearned for thee. It has seemed as if every one knew thee except myself."

Sorrow looked up and saw a man standing near her.

"I am a painter," he said. "They say I have talent and enthusiasm, but that until I am wise with the knowledge which is born of Sorrow, I shall never do any great work. I wish to live for Art, and for Art alone; therefore I welcome Sorrow. Place thy hand in mine, O Sorrow."

But Sorrow shook her head. "Sorrow will come to thee in thy turn, O painter," she said. "Never seek for her. She will come of her own free-will when thou least awaitest her, and then she will make thee wise with the knowledge which is hers and hers only."

She thought of him as she wandered on; and the next morning she retraced her steps and unperceived entered his studio. Here she found every sign of luxury and comfort. She looked at his paintings, and recognised in them undeveloped power, and genius trying to express itself. His work was good, but there was something lacking in it: depth of meaning.

A child was playing on the hearth, waiting no

doubt for her father to come back and finish the portrait which rested against the easel. She was a lovely little brown-haired maiden. Sorrow stooped down and kissed her, and then, full of remorse, hastened away.

That same night it was known that Sorrow had visited the artist's home, for his youngest and best-loved child had died.

Meanwhile Joy was working busily in the factories, amongst the toilers of the great cities, amongst the outcasts, amongst the poor and wretched. They looked up from their work, from their poverty, from their wretchedness, and saw Joy's gracious presence. She brought hope into their lives, and active sympathy. Some of their faces caught the expression of her face; lips which had never learnt to smile, now learnt from her. Hardened hearts yielded to her. That which Sorrow could not teach, Joy was teaching: the beauty of holiness, the unconquerableness of hope, the loveliness of truth.

Joy took the children into the country, and

they plucked the daffodils and violets and primroses, and they gathered berries and mosses and richly tinted leaves. They listened to the singing of the birds. Their hearts were filled with gratitude and wonder. They had not known how fair the world was until Joy came amongst them.

Joy visited the poet and gave him Sorrow's farewell message. And because of Joy's visit, the poet's words were spoken throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Sorrow heard of Joy's noble work and blessed her for it.

"Let me ever give place to Joy," she thought. "The world has no need of me. The fame which I have won for the artist will never make up to him for the loss of his child. His art is tenfold richer, but his life is tenfold poorer."

One night she dreamed that she went to the halls of Death, and asked to be shown into the presence of the Lord of Death.

"Why art thou here?" asked the Lord of Death, gravely, as she stood before him, her head

bowed, and her arms folded in front of her: a sad figure.

"I have come to beg thee to put thy cold hand on me," she whispered; "I wish to die. I wish to free the world of my dark presence. I wish my very name to be forgotten."

But the Lord of Death answered thus: "Thy name and the name of Joy are bracketed together. Ye are twin sisters. When thou diest, Joy must die also. Surely thou dost not wish her to die when she is doing her good work. What would the world be without Joy? And yet if I lay my cold hand on thee, I must needs lay it on Joy. For as the light implies the darkness, and as the day implies the night, so Joy implies Sorrow, and Sorrow implies Joy. Thus, thou seest ye are inseparably bound up together. Together ye came into the world, and together ye must leave the world. What is thy choice, Sorrow? Wilt thou live or die?"

"I will live!" cried Sorrow, "so that Joy, my twin sister, may live for evermore. For the world has need of her smiles, her laughter,

and all her loving influence. O Lord of Death, this is my choice—life for evermore."

And Sorrow awoke, remembering her dream. In her heart there was that strange gladness which comes of sacrifice. She sought out her sister. She scarcely recognised her, for there was a beauty on Joy's face which Sorrow had never before seen so clearly defined.

"You have given me a great work to do," whispered Joy, as she clung close to Sorrow. "Never until now did I realise the grand possibilities of life. Give me of your knowledge, Sorrow, and help me to be a great teacher, a great reformer, as you wished me to be. O Sorrow, I have seen smiles light up wan faces of men and women and children. I have seen wonderful things happen. Ah, and I have heard people bless Sorrow, because Sorrow has prepared the way for Joy. Come back from your wanderings, dear, for the world has need of you as well as of me.

"Kiss me, Joy," said Sorrow, "your words comfort me."

And Joy kissed her.

"You will never know death," said Sorrow, as she looked proudly at her sister. "Other things may pass away, but Joy shall live for ever."

"And you, dear Sorrow?" asked Joy.

"I too shall live for ever," answered Sorrow, gently. "And Joy, when I go about my work, you must come with me, to soothe the grief I bring, and to kiss away the tears called forth by my presence. Will you promise this to me, Joy?"

And Joy promised it.

Then the sisters passed on together in silence. The golden sunshine fell on their faces, and over their fair hair. They seemed wond'rously alike, for Joy had borrowed some part of Sorrow's expression, and Sorrow's eyes had caught the light in Joy's eyes. And as in the old days when they danced over the daisied fields and through the daffodil woods, so now, no one looking at them could tell which was Sorrow and which was Joy.

AN IDYL OF LONDON

AN IDYL OF LONDON.

IT was one o'clock, and many of the students in the National Gallery had left off work, and were refreshing themselves with lunch and conversation. There was one old worker who had not stirred from his place, but he had put down his brush, and had taken from his pocket a small book, which was like its owner, thin and shabby of covering. He seemed to find pleasure in reading it, for he turned over its pages with all the tenderness characteristic of one who loves what he reads. Now and again he glanced at his unfinished copy of the beautiful portrait of Andrea del Sarto, and once his eyes rested on another copy next to his, better and truer than his; and once he stooped to pick up a girl's prune-coloured tie which had fallen from the neighbouring easel. After this he seemed to be-

come unconscious of his surroundings, as unconscious indeed as any one of the pictures near him. Any one might have been justified in mistaking him for the portrait of a man, but that his lips moved; for it was his custom to read softly to himself.

The students passed back to their places, not troubling to notice him, because they knew from experience that he never noticed them, and that all greetings were wasted on him, and all words were wanton expenditure of breath. They had come to regard him very much in the same way as many of us regard the wonders of Nature, without astonishment, without any questionings, and often without any interest. One girl, a newcomer, did chance to say to her companion:

"How ill that old man looks!"

"Oh, he always looks like that," was the answer. "You will soon get accustomed to him. Come along! I must finish my 'Blind Beggar' this afternoon."

In a few minutes most of the workers were busy again, although there were some who con-

tinued to chat quietly, and several young men who seemed reluctant to leave their girl-friends, and who were by no means encouraged to go! One young man came to claim his book and pipe which he had left in the charge of a bright-eyed girl, who was copying Sir Joshua's Angels. She gave him his treasures, and received in exchange a dark-red rose which she fastened in her belt; and then he returned to his portrait of Mrs. Siddons. But there was something in his disconsolate manner which made one suspect that he thought less of Mrs. Siddons's beauty than of the beauty of the girl who was wearing the dark-red rose! The strangers, strolling through the rooms, stopped now and again to peer curiously at the students' work. They were stared at indignantly by the students themselves, but they made no attempt to move away, and even ventured sometimes to pass criticisms of no tender character on some of the copies. The fierce-looking man who was copying "The Horse-Fair," deliberately put down his brushes, folded his arms, and waited defiantly until they had gone by; but others,

wiser in their generation, went on painting calmly. Several workers were painting the new Raphael; one of them was a white-haired old gentlewoman, whose hand was trembling, and yet skilful still. More than once she turned to give a few hints to the young girl near her, who looked in some distress and doubt. Just the needful help was given, and then the girl plied her brush merrily, smiling the while with pleasure and gratitude. There seemed to be a genial, kindly influence at work, a certain homeliness too, which must needs assert itself where many are gathered together, working side by side. All made a harmony: the wonderful pictures collected from many lands and many centuries, each with its meaning, and its message from the past; the ever-present memories of the painters themselves, who had worked and striven and conquered; and the living human beings, each with his wealth of earnest endeavour and hope.

Meanwhile, the old man read on uninterruptedly until two hands were put over his book, and a gentle voice said:

"Mr. Lindall, you have had no lunch again. Do you know, I begin to hate Lucretius. He always makes you forget your food."

The old man looked up, and something like a smile passed over his joyless face when he saw Helen Stanley bending over him.

"Ah!" he answered, "you must not hate Lucretius. I have had more pleasant hours with him than with any living person."

He rose, and came forward to examine her copy of Andrea del Sarto's portrait.

"Yours is better than mine," he said, critically; "in fact, mine is a failure. I think I shall only get a small price for mine; indeed, I doubt whether I shall get sufficient to pay for my funeral."

"You speak dismally," she answered, smiling.

"I missed you yesterday," he continued, half dreamily. "I left my work, and I wandered through the rooms, and I did not even read Lucretius. Something seemed to have gone from my life; at first I thought it must be my favourite Raphael, or the Murillo, but it was

neither the one nor the other—it was you. That was strange, was n't it? But you know we get accustomed to anything, and perhaps I should have missed you less the second day, and by the end of a week I should not have missed you at all. Mercifully we have in us the power of forgetting."

"I do not wish to plead for myself," she said, "but I do not believe that you or any one could really forget. That which outsiders call forgetfulness might be called by the better name of resignation."

"I don't care about talking any more now," he said, suddenly, and he went to his easel and worked silently at his picture; and Helen Stanley glanced at him and thought she had never seen her old companion look so forlorn and desolate as he did to-day. He looked as if no gentle hand had ever been placed on him in kindliness and affection, and that seemed to her a terrible thing; for she was one of those prehistorically minded persons who persist in believing that affection is as needful to human life

as rain to flower-life. When first she came to work at the Gallery—some twelve months ago—she had noticed this old man, and had wished for his companionship; she was herself lonely and sorrowful, and, although young, had to fight her own battles, and had learnt something of the difficulties of fighting, and this had given her an experience beyond her years. She was not more than twenty-four years of age, but she looked rather older, and though she had beautiful eyes, full of meaning and kindness, her features were decidedly plain as well as unattractive. There were some in the Gallery who said amongst themselves jestingly, that as Mr. Lindall had waited so many years before talking to any one, he might have chosen some one better worth the waiting for! But they soon became accustomed to seeing Helen Stanley and Mr. Lindall together, and they laughed less than before; and meanwhile the acquaintance ripened into a sort of friendship, half sulky on his part, and wholly kind on her part. He told her nothing about himself, and he asked nothing

about herself; for weeks he never even knew her name. Sometimes he did not speak at all, and the two friends would work silently side by side, until it was time to go; and then he waited until she was ready, and walked with her across Trafalgar Square, where they parted, and went their own ways.

But occasionally, when she least expected it, he would speak with glowing enthusiasm on art; then his eyes seemed to become bright, and his bent figure more erect, and his whole bearing proud and dignified. There were times, too, when he would speak on other subjects: on the morality of free-thought, and on those who had died to vindicate free-thought, on Bruno, of blessèd memory, on him and scores of others too. He would speak of the different schools of philosophy; he would laugh at himself and at all who, having given time and thought to the study of life's complicated problems, had not reached one step farther than the old-world thinkers. Perhaps he would quote one of his favourite philosophers, and then suddenly relapse

into silence, returning to his wonted abstraction, and to his indifference to his surroundings. Helen Stanley had learnt to understand his ways, and to appreciate his mind, and, without intruding on him in any manner, had put herself gently into his life, as his quiet champion and his friend. No one, in her presence, dared speak slightingly of the old man, or to make fun of his tumble-down appearance, or of his worn-out silk hat with a crack in the side, or of his rag of a black tie, which, together with his overcoat, had "seen better days." Once she brought her needle and thread, and darned the torn sleeve during her lunch-time; and though he never knew it, it was a satisfaction to her to have helped him.

To-day she noticed that he was painting badly, and that he seemed to take no interest in his work; but she went on busily with her own picture, and was so engrossed in it that she did not at first observe that he had packed up his brushes, and was preparing to go home.

"Three more strokes," he said, quietly, "and

you will have finished your picture. I shall never finish mine: Perhaps you will be good enough to set it right for me. I am not coming here again. I don't seem to have caught the true expression: what do you think? But I am not going to let it worry me, for I am sure you will promise to do your best for me. See, I will hand over these colours and these brushes to you, and no doubt you will accept the palette as well. I have no further use for it."

Helen Stanley took the palette which he held out towards her, and looked at him as though she would wish to question him.

"It is very hot here," he continued, "and I am going out. I am tired of work."

He hesitated, and then added: "I should like you to come with me, if you can spare the time."

She packed up her things at once, and the two friends moved slowly away, he gazing absently at the pictures, and she wondering in her mind as to the meaning of his strange mood.

When they were on the steps inside the building, he turned to Helen Stanley and said:

"I should like to go back to the pictures once more. I feel as if I must stand amongst them just a little longer. They have been my companions for so long, that they are almost part of myself. I can close my eyes and recall them faithfully. But I want to take a last look at them; I want to feel once more the presence of the great masters, and to refresh my mind with their genius. When I look at their work, I think of their life, and can only wonder at their death. It was so strange that they should die."

They went back together, and he took her to his favourite pictures, but remained speechless before them, and she did not disturb his thoughts. At last he said:

"I am ready to go. I have said farewell to them all. I know nothing more wonderful than being amongst a number of fine pictures. It is almost overwhelming. One expects Nature to be grand; but one does not expect Man to be grand."

"You know we don't agree there," she answered. "*I* expect everything grand and great from Man."

They went out of the Gallery, and into Trafalgar Square. It was a scorching afternoon in August, but there was some cooling comfort in seeing the dancing water of the fountains sparkling so brightly in the sunshine.

"Do you mind stopping here a few minutes?" he said. "I should like to sit down and watch. There is so much to see."

She led the way to a seat, one end of which was occupied by a workman, who was sleeping soundly, and snoring too, his arms folded tightly together. He had a little clay-pipe in the corner of his mouth: it seemed to be tucked in so snugly that there was not much danger of its falling to the ground. At last Helen spoke to her companion.

"What do you mean by saying that you will not be able to finish your picture? Perhaps you are not well. Indeed, you don't look well. You make me anxious, for I have a great regard for you."

"I am ill and suffering," he answered, quietly. "I thought I should have died yesterday; but

I made up my mind to live until I saw you again, and I thought I would ask you to spend the afternoon with me, and go with me to Westminster Abbey, and sit with me in the Cloisters. I do not feel able to go by myself, and I know of no one to ask except you ; and I believed you would not refuse me, for you have been very kind to me. I do not quite understand why you have been kind to me, but I am wonderfully grateful to you. To-day I heard some one in the Gallery say that you were plain. I turned round and I said, 'I beg your pardon, *I* think she is very beautiful.' I think they laughed, and that puzzled me ; for you have always seemed to me a very beautiful person."

At that moment the little clay-pipe fell from the workman's mouth, and was broken into bits. He awoke with a start, gazed stupidly at the old man and his companion, and at the broken clay-pipe.

"Curse my luck!" he said, yawning. "I was fond of that damnèd little pipe."

The old man drew his own pipe and his own tobacco-pouch from his pocket.

"Take these, stranger," he said. "I don't want them. And good luck to you."

The man's face brightened up as he took the pipe and pouch.

"You 're uncommon kind," he said. "Can you spare them?" he added, holding them out half-reluctantly.

"Yes," answered the old man; "I shall not smoke again. You may as well have these matches too."

The labourer put them in his pocket, smiled his thanks, and walked some little distance off; and Helen watched him examine his new pipe, and then fill it with tobacco and light it.

Mr. Lindall proposed that they should be getting on their way to Westminster, and they soon found themselves in the Abbey. They sat together in the Poet's Corner; a smile of quiet happiness broke over the old man's tired face as he looked around and took in all the solemn beauty and grandeur of the resting-place of the great.

"You know," he said, half to himself, half to

his companion, "I have no belief of any kind, and no hopes and no fears; but all through my life it has been a comfort to me to sit quietly in a church or a cathedral. The graceful arches, the sun shining through the stained windows, the vaulted roof, the noble columns, have helped me to understand the mystery which all our books of philosophy cannot make clear, though we bend over them year after year, and grow old over them, old in age and in spirit. Though I myself have never been outwardly a worshipper, I have never sat in a place of worship but that, for the time being, I have felt a better man. But directly the voice of doctrine or dogma was raised, the spell was broken for me, and that which I hoped was being made clear, had no further meaning for me. There was only one voice which ever helped me, the voice of the organ arousing me, thrilling me, filling me with strange longing, with welcome sadness, with solemn gladness. I have always thought that music can give an answer when everything else is of no avail. I do not know what you believe,"

"I am so young to have found out," she said, almost pleadingly.

"Don't worry yourself," he answered, kindly. "Be brave and strong, and let the rest go. I should like to live long enough to see what you will make of your life. I believe you will never be false to yourself or to any one. That is rare. I believe you will not let any lower ideal take the place of your high ideal of what is beautiful and noble in art, in life. I believe that you will never let despair get the upper hand of you. If it does, you may as well die; yes, you may as well. And I entreat you not to lose your entire faith in humanity. There is nothing like that for withering up the very core of the heart. I tell you, humanity and nature have so much in common with each other, that, if you lose your entire faith in the former, you will lose part of your pleasure in the latter; you will see less beauty in the trees, the flowers, and the fields, less grandeur in the mighty mountains and the sea. The seasons will come and go, and you will scarcely heed their coming and going: Winter

will settle over your soul, just as it settled over mine. And you see what I am."

They had now passed into the Cloisters, and they sat down in one of the recesses of the windows, and looked out upon the rich plot of grass which the Cloisters enclose. There was not a soul there except themselves: the cool and the quiet and the beauty of the spot refreshed these pilgrims, and they rested in calm enjoyment.

Helen was the first to break the silence.

"I am glad you have brought me here," she said; "I shall never grumble now at not being able to afford a fortnight in the country. This is better than anything else."

"It has always been my summer holiday to come here," he said. "When I first came I was like you, young and hopeful, and I had wonderful visions of what I intended to do and to be. Here it was I made a vow that I would become a great painter, and win for myself a resting-place in this very Abbey. There is humour in the situation, is there not?"

"I don't like to hear you say that," she answered. "It is not always possible for us to fulfil all our ambitions. Still, it is better to have had them, and failed of them, than not to have had them at all."

"Possibly," he replied, coldly. Then he added: "I wish you would tell me something about yourself. You have always interested me."

"I have nothing to tell you about myself," she answered, frankly. "I am alone in the world, without friends and without relations. The very name I use is not a real name. I was a foundling. At times I am sorry I do not belong to any one, and at other times I am glad. You know I am fond of books and of art, so my life is not altogether empty; and I find my pleasure in hard work. When I saw you at the Gallery, I wished to know you, and I asked one of the students who you were. He told me you were a misanthrope. Then I did not care so much about knowing you, until one day you spoke to me about my painting, and that was the beginning of our friendship."

"Forty years ago," he said, sadly, "the friend of my boyhood deceived me. I had not thought it possible that he could be false to me. He screened himself behind me, and became prosperous and respected, at the expense of my honour. I vowed I would never again make a friend. A few years later, when I was beginning to hold up my head, the woman whom I loved deceived me. Then I put from me all affection and all love. Greater natures than mine are better able to bear these troubles, but my heart contracted and withered up."

He paused for a moment, many recollections overpowering him. Then he went on telling her the history of his life, unfolding to her the story of his hopes and ambitions, describing to her the very home where he was born, and the dark-eyed sister whom he had loved, and with whom he had played, over the daisied fields, and through the carpeted woods, and all amongst the richly tinted bracken. One day he was told she was dead, and that he must never speak her name; but he spoke it all the day and all the night—Beryl,

nothing but Beryl ; and he looked for her in the fields, and in the woods, and amongst the bracken. It seemed as if he had unlocked the casket of his heart, closed for so many years, and as if all the memories of the past and all the secrets of his life were rushing out, glad to be free once more, and grateful for the open air of sympathy.

"Beryl was as swift as a deer!" he exclaimed. "You would have laughed to see her on the moor. Ah! it was hard to give up all thoughts of meeting her again. They told me I should see her in heaven ; but I did not care about heaven. I wanted Beryl on earth, as I knew her, a merry, laughing sister. I think you are right : we don't forget ; we become resigned in a dead, dull kind of way."

Suddenly he said : "I don't know why I have told you all this. And yet it has been such a pleasure to me. You are the only person to whom I could have spoken about myself, for no one else but you would have cared."

"Don't you think," she said, gently, "that you made a mistake in letting your experiences em-

bitter you? Because you had been unlucky in one or two instances, it did not follow that all the world was against you. Perhaps you unconsciously put yourself against all the world, and therefore saw every one in an unfavourable light. It seems so easy to do that. Trouble comes to most people, does n't it?—and your philosophy should have taught you to make the best of it. At least that is my notion of the value of philosophy."

She spoke hesitatingly, as though she gave utterance to these words against her will.

"I am sure you are right, child," he said, eagerly.

He put his hands to his eyes, but he could not keep back the tears.

"I have been such a lonely old man," he sobbed; "no one can tell what a lonely, loveless life mine has been. If I were not so old and so tired, I should like to begin all over again."

He sobbed for many minutes, and she did not know what to say to him of comfort; but she took his hand within her own, and gently

caressed it, as one might do to a little child in pain. He looked up and smiled through his tears.

"You have been very good to me," he said, "and I daresay you have thought me ungrateful. You mended my coat for me one morning, and not a day has passed but that I have looked at the darn, and thought of you. I liked to remember that you had done it for me. But you have done far more than this for me; you have put some sweetness into my life. Whatever becomes of me hereafter, I shall never be able to think of my life on earth as anything but beautiful, because you thought kindly of me, and acted kindly for me. The other night, when this terrible pain came over me, I wished you were near me; I wished to hear your voice. There is very beautiful music in your voice."

"I would have come to you gladly," she said, smiling quietly at him. "You must make a promise that when you feel ill again, you will send for me. Then you will see what a splendid nurse I am, and how soon you will become

strong and well under my care, strong enough to paint many more pictures, each one better than the last. Now, will you promise?"

"Yes," he said, and he raised her hand reverently to his lips.

"You are not angry with me for doing that?" he asked, suddenly. "I should not like to vex you."

"I am not vexed," she answered, kindly.

"Then perhaps I may kiss it once more?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, and again he raised her hand to his lips.

"Thank you," he said, quietly; "that was kind of you. Do you see that broken sun-ray yonder? Is it not golden? I find it very pleasant to sit here; and I am quite happy, and almost free from pain. Lately I have been troubled with a dull, thudding pain near my heart; but now I feel so strong, that I believe I shall finish that Andrea del Sarto after all."

"Of course you will," she answered, cheerily, "and I shall have to confess that yours is better

than mine! I am quite willing to yield the palm to you."

"I must alter the expression of the mouth," he replied. "That is the part which has worried me. I don't think I told you that I have had a commission to copy Rembrandt's Old Jew. I must set to work on that next week."

"But you have given me your palette and brushes!" she laughed.

"You must be generous enough to lend them to me," he said, smiling. "By the way, I intend to give you my books, all of them. Some day I must show them to you. I especially value my philosophical books; they have been my faithful companions through many years. I believe you do not read Greek. That is a pity, because you would surely enjoy Aristotle. I think I must teach you Greek: it would be an agreeable legacy to leave you when I pass away into the Great Silence."

"I should like to learn," she said, wondering to hear him speak so unreservedly. It seemed as if some vast barrier had been rolled aside,

and as if she were getting to know him better, having been allowed to glance into his past life, to sympathise with his past mistakes, and with the failure of his ambitions, and with the deadening of his heart.

"You must read Æschylus," he continued, enthusiastically; "and, if I mistake not, the *Agamemnon* will be an epoch in your life. You will find that all these studies will serve to ennoble your art, and you will be able to put mind into your work, and not merely form and colour. Do you know, I feel so well, that I believe I shall not only live to finish Andrea del Sarto, but also to smoke another pipe?"

"You have been too rash to-day," she laughed, "giving away your pipe and pouch, your palette and brushes, in this reckless manner! I must get you a new pipe to-morrow. I wonder you did not part with your venerable Lucretius"

"That reminds me," he said, fumbling in his pocket; "I think I have dropped my Lucretius. I fancy I left it somewhere in the Poet's Corner. It would grieve me to lose that book."

"Let me go and look for it," she said, and she advanced a few steps and then came back to him.

"You have been saying many kind words to me," she said, as she put her hand on his arm, "and I have not told you that I value your friendship, and am grateful to you for letting me be more than a mere stranger to you. I have been very lonely in my life; for I am not one to make friends easily, and it has been a great privilege to me to talk with you. I want you to know this; for if I have been anything to you, you have been a great deal to me. I have never met with much sympathy from those of my own age: I have found them narrow and unyielding, and they found me dull and uninteresting. They had passed through few experiences, and knew nothing about failure or success, and some of them did not even understand the earnestness of endeavour, and laughed at me when I spoke of a high ideal. So I withdrew into myself, and should probably have grown still more isolated than I was before, but

that I met you, and, as time went on, we became friends. I shall always remember your teaching, and I will try to keep to a high ideal of life and art and endeavour, and I will not let despair creep into my heart, and I will not lose my faith in humanity."

As she spoke, a lingering ray of sunshine lit up her face and gently caressed her soft brown hair: slight though her form, and sombre her clothes, and unlovely her features, she seemed a gracious presence, because of her earnestness.

"Now," she said, cheerily, "you rest here until I come back with your Lucretius, and then I think I must be getting on my way home. But you must fix a time for our first Greek lesson; for we must begin to-morrow."

When she had gone, he walked in the Cloisters, holding his hat in his hand and his stick under his arm. There was a quiet smile on his face, which was called forth by pleasant thoughts in his mind, and he did not look quite so shrunken and shrivelled as usual. His eyes were fixed on the ground; but he raised them and observed

a white cat creeping towards him. It came and rubbed itself against his foot, and purring with all its might, seemed determined to win some kind of notice from him. The old man stooped down to stroke it, and was just touching its sleek coat, when he suddenly withdrew his hand, and groaned deeply. He struggled to the recess, and sank back. The stick fell on the stone with a clatter, and the battered hat rolled down beside it, and the white cat fled away in terror ; but realising that there was no cause for alarm, it came back and crouched near the silent figure of the old man, watching him intently. Then it stretched out its paw and played with his hand, doing its utmost to coax him into a little fun ; but he would not be coaxed, and the cat lost all patience with him, and left him to himself.

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Meanwhile Helen Stanley was looking for the lost Lucretius in the Poet's Corner. She found it lying near Chaucer's tomb, and was just going

to take it to her friend, when she saw the workman to whom they had spoken in Trafalgar Square. He recognised her at once, and came towards her.

"I 've been having a quiet half-hour here," he said. "It does me a sight of good to sit in the Abbey."

"You should go into the Cloisters," she said, kindly. "I have been sitting there with my friend. He will be interested to hear that you love this beautiful Abbey."

"I should like to see him again," said the workman. "He had a kind way about him, and that pipe he gave me is an uncommon good one. Still, I am sorry I smashed the little clay-pipe. I 'd grown used to it. I 'd smoked it ever since my little girl died and left me alone in the world. I used to bring my little girl here, and now I come alone. But it is n't the same thing."

"No, it could not be the same thing," said Helen, gently. "But you find some little comfort here?"

"Some little comfort," he answered. "One can't expect much."

They went together into the Cloisters, and as they came near the recess where the old man rested, Helen said :

"Why, he has fallen asleep! He must have been very tired. And he has dropped his hat and stick. Thank you. If you will put them down there, I will watch by his side until he wakes up. I don't suppose he will sleep for long."

The workman stooped down to pick up the hat and stick, and glanced at the sleeper. Something in the sleeper's countenance arrested his attention. He turned to the girl, and saw that she was watching him.

"What is it?" she asked, anxiously. "What is the matter with you?

He tried to speak, but his voice failed him, and all he could do, was to point with trembling hand to the old man.

Helen looked, and a loud cry broke from her lips. The old man was dead.

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